The "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" Disgrace Cass Sunstein

THE NEW REPUBLIC

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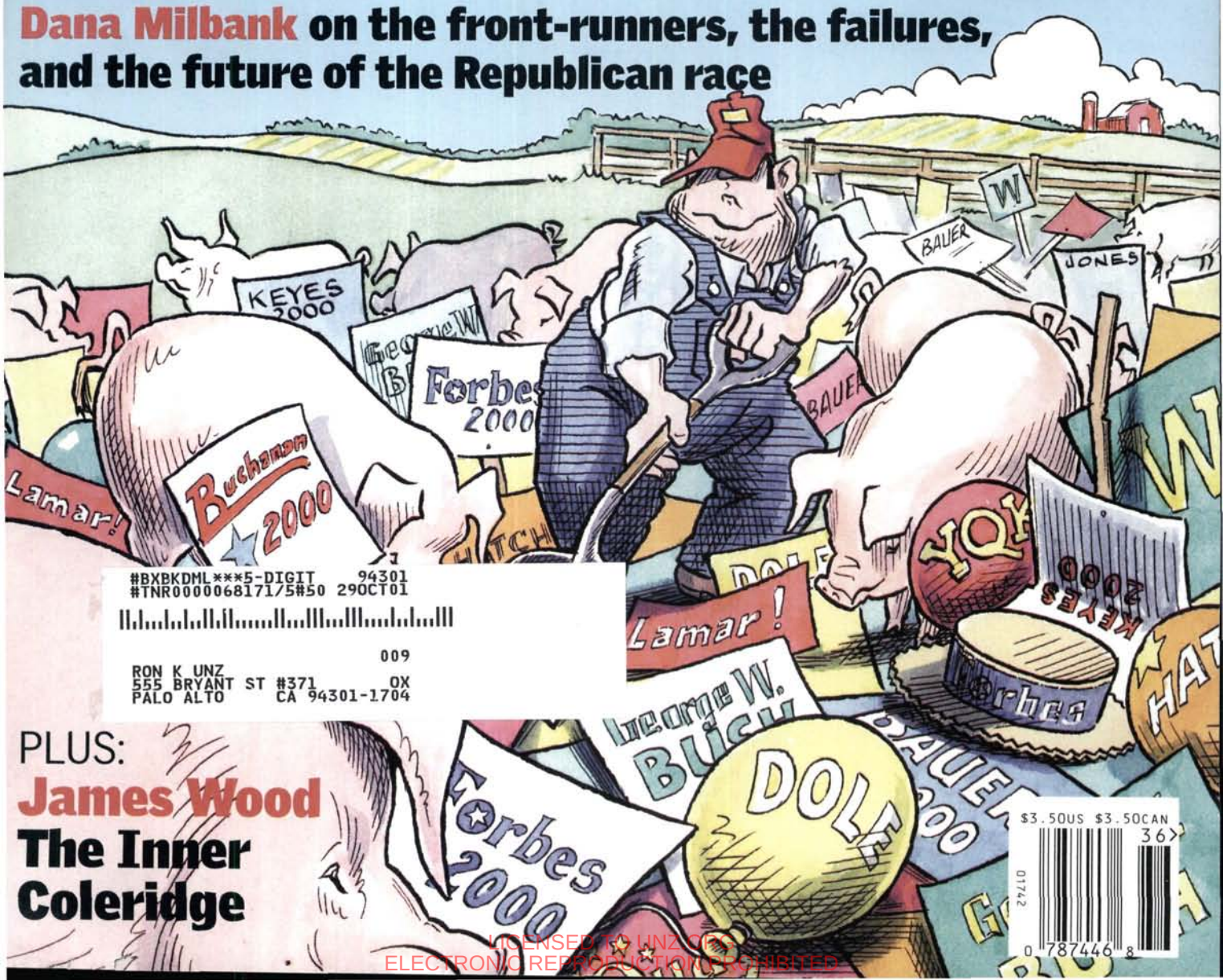
CRUMBLING COLOMBIA
PRESIDENT BEATTY?

September 6, 1999

FIELD OF FEWER DREAMS

Dana Milbank on the front-runners, the failures, and the future of the Republican race



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THE NEW REPUBLIC

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CORRESPONDENCE

Shy away

TO THE EDITORS:

Michelle Cottle's "Selling Shyness" (August 2) carelessly turns back the clock, promoting, rather than clarifying, the debilitating stigma of mental illness. The article reinforces the myth that there are no real mental illnesses and, therefore, no real treatments.

Unfortunately, these psychiatric illnesses—depression, schizophrenia, anxiety, and even social phobia—are all too real. If you are unsure about this, just ask the 20 percent of Americans who suffer from them. Like other illnesses, they manifest themselves on no one's schedule and can quickly progress from the ordinary, everyday "blues" to clinical depression or from "shyness" to crippling social phobia. Fortunately, medical research has progressed in defining these illnesses, but, as with all diagnostic definitions, there is no sudden moment at which we reach a crystal-clear distinction, no "bright shining line" between similar disorders, or, at times, even between illness and health.

Hypertension, diabetes, hormone deficiencies, AIDS, depression—all have required years of medical research to refine the diagnostic tools and criteria we use today. As we become better at diagnosing illnesses, we can more effectively treat them.

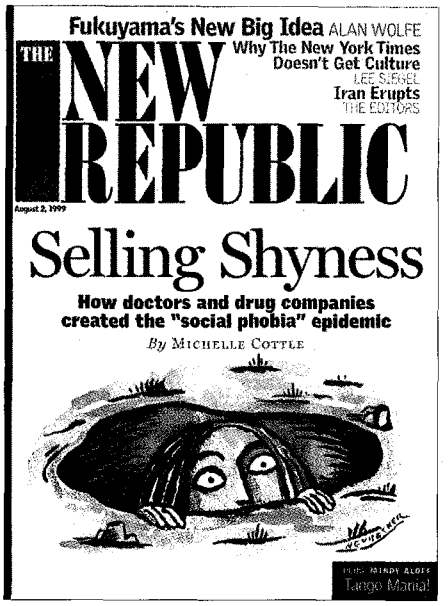
ALLAN TASMAN, M.D.
President
American Psychiatric Association
Washington, D.C.

TO THE EDITORS:

As a card-carrying member of the American Psychiatric Association, I share the concern Michelle Cottle expresses about what seems to be an emerging epidemic of social phobia. While the condition undoubtedly exists, causes distress, and requires treatment, it strains credibility that 33 million Americans are its victims. Cottle cogently describes the reasons for this apparent efflorescence of social phobia, including the changed DSM-IV criteria and the skillful encouragement of pharmaceutical companies.

But, just as is the case with the distinction between clinical depression and unhappiness or the blues, social phobia cannot be distinguished reliably from shyness by the use of the DSM-IV diagnostic criteria. In the absence of any clear objective diagnostic determinant, these criteria can be interpreted very differently by observers with varying degrees of skill and motivations.

By conflating human qualities with



clinical syndromes and trying to affix a DSM label and psychotropic prescription to every behavioral vagary, some psychiatrists seem bent on medicalizing the human condition itself.

PAUL CHODOFF, M.D.
Washington, D.C.

TO THE EDITORS:

I would have thought that intelligent journalists had made their peace with biological psychiatry by now. The central insight involved is that there is a biological component to personality and behavior. Why is this insight so repugnant to writers like Michelle Cottle?

Her ridicule of pathological shyness reminds me of the unfeeling commentary showered on clinical depressives when the new generation of antidepressants such as Prozac arrived. Back then, we were told that unipolar depression was, in fact, nothing more than a simple case of the blues. Now Cottle wants us to believe that pathological shyness is nothing more than "normal" self-doubting and, moreover, was invented by pharmaceutical companies. It is disappointing that TNR continues to perpetuate the myth that there is something shady and immoral about treating mental disorders pharmaceutically.

Note to Cottle: There is no "extra pharmacological edge" to be gained by taking serotonin-boosting drugs if you do not suffer from the neurochemical imbalances the drugs are designed to address. The author is simply wrong here. The idea that borderline cases can be well served by these medications is absurd. The only effects normal people are likely to notice are the negative ones: stomach upset, loose stools, ejaculatory delay. Cottle's own primary source in the article tells her that the drugs won't do anything for you unless your mental health is sufficiently impaired to begin with. Paxil is not some exotic, expensive form of prescription amphetamine.

Cottle is correct to question the inflated estimates of clinical shyness that are quoted whenever funding cycles roll around, but this is hardly a revolutionary development. Fund-raisers have been inflating cancer and heart disease figures for years.

How easy it is to continue the longstanding American tradition of lampooning the mentally ill. Your own contributor Robert Hughes explained all of this some time ago. Wasn't anybody paying attention?

DIRK HANSON
Ely, Minnesota

TO THE EDITORS:

"Selling Shyness" is a superb account of the social construction of mental illness in modern-day America. More than producing cultural enfeeblement, however, expanding the boundaries of illness and prescribing psychoactive drugs also produce more individuals physically dependent on drugs. Indeed, Paxil (paroxetine), touted as a treatment for social phobia, has higher rates of reported withdrawal reactions than similar drugs (such as Prozac, Zoloft, Celexa, and Luvox). Withdrawal reactions occur in 20 to 60 percent of those who abruptly stop taking these drugs, and may include dizziness, flulike symptoms, burning sensations, and sleep disturbances, as well as anxiety and crying spells. Since many doctors are blithely unaware that antidepressants produce a withdrawal syndrome, they tend to see these symptoms as evidence that the condition is "chronic" and that the drug is "effective." Patients are encouraged to resume the drug and, as a result of prolonged use, will have an even harder time stopping it the next time around.

DAVID COHEN, PH.D.
Montreal, Canada

TO THE EDITORS:

Michelle Cottle's piece was a bravura performance. How arch her condescension! How deft her skewering of the Bad Guys: those psychiatrists, those pharmaceutical companies! How thinly veiled her contempt for poor fools taken in by the psychiatry-pharmaceutical complex! It was a nice touch to scatter quotations from Aldous Huxley, like little diamonds, throughout her text.

continued on page 45

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NATIONAL BESTSELLER

"Irresistibly readable.... Fascinating stuff.... Cook's portrait of a woman in the thick of things during the hardest of times...will stand as definitive."—*The Washington Post*

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Cook is especially good at probing Roosevelt's psychological state and explaining her many complex relationships with friends and family."
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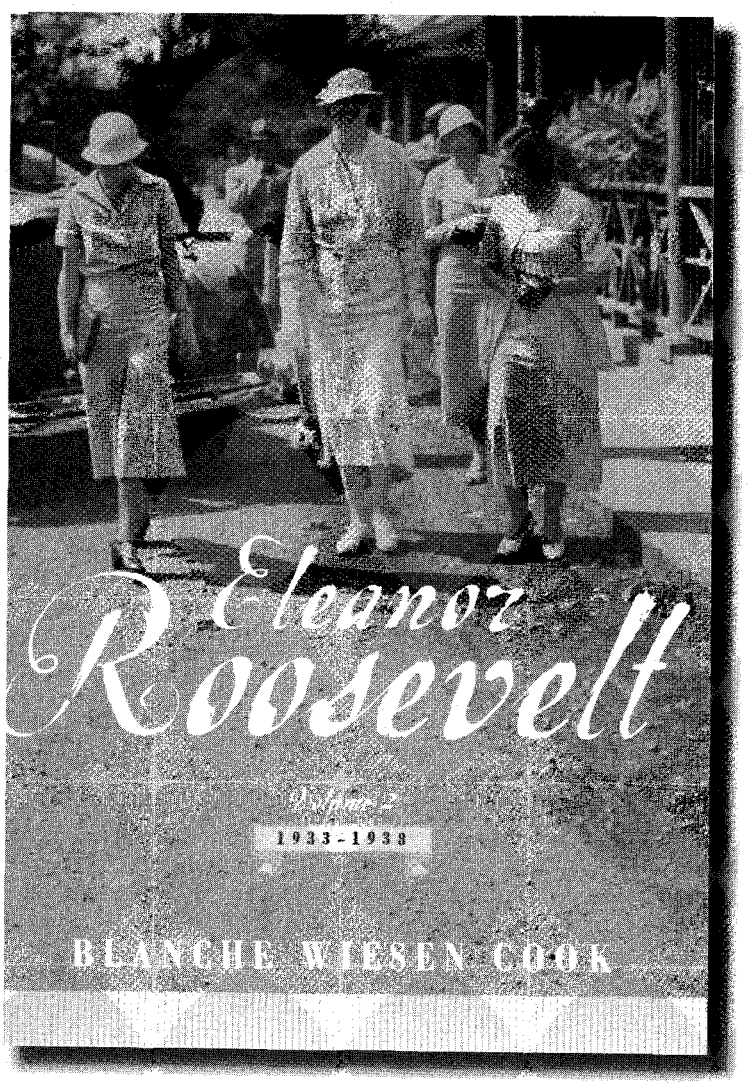
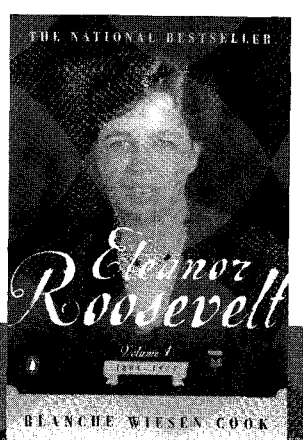
Are you listening, Hillary?"
—Maureen Dowd, *The New York Times Book Review,* front page





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TRB

FROM WASHINGTON

Bad Rap

WARREN BEATTY HAS always been more than just a movie star. At times, he has pursued involvement in liberal Democratic politics with as much dedication as he has pursued acting itself. (Not to mention his other legendary avocation.) He worked for Bobby Kennedy in 1968 and for George McGovern in 1972. He was an advisor to failed candidate Gary Hart. The latest news, though, is that Beatty is pondering a run of his own.

How seriously should we take the prospect of Beatty for President? The likeliest answer is: not very. Chances are he'll decide not to take the plunge and that he wouldn't come close to winning if he did, whether he ran as a Democrat or, as some have suggested, as an independent. On the other hand, he's making a point of not ruling anything out, and for years now he's been bemoaning the lack of a meaningful difference between the two major parties, which he attributes largely to the growing influence of corporate money on the once-liberal Democrats. America is drifting toward "plutocracy," says the man from the mansion in Beverly Hills; "the political system is so corrupted, we don't need a third party. We need a second party." If he ran, Beatty would stand for the true liberal faith as he and his fellow left-wing Democrats see it. Thus, even if he doesn't run, Beatty's ideology is still interesting for what it tells us about the fin de siècle condition of California-style left-liberalism.

The man doesn't exactly write position papers. But we can extrapolate from his film oeuvre—especially his most overtly ideological movie, the 1998 *Bulworth*, which Beatty cowrote, directed, and starred in. *Bulworth* didn't do much business, as they say in Hollywood, so relatively few Americans have seen a film that, for all its comic elements and "oversimplifications" (Beatty's word), constitutes its maker's deeply felt political manifesto. And the worldview expressed in that manifesto is remarkably warped. It is, actually, quite illiberal.

Bulworth opens with a shot of the U.S. Capitol; a DO NOT ENTER sign stands in the foreground. This clumsy bit of symbolism (Beatty's attempt, perhaps, to replicate the filmic tactics of his mentor, Elia Kazan, who also used to scatter the landscapes of his movies with similarly obvious symbols) sets the theme. Ordinary Americans, we learn, are systematically shut out of their democracy by the power and money of the giant corporations that control politicians. Black Americans, especially, are victimized. Yet, for all that, "the populace is unaroused."

Jay Billington Bulworth used to be an honest liberal—we know that from the pictures of him with RFK and other '60s icons on his office wall (were these props borrowed from Beatty's home?). But today, as the Democratic primary in his re-election race approaches, Bulworth is deeply depressed about his decline into a corrupt pol who'll do anything to get elected, including turning his back on affirmative action, supporting welfare reform, and eagerly mouthing platitudes about "traditional values." The senator's depression leads to sleeplessness, which leads, through a series of absurd plot turns, to a political awakening. Soon, he is hanging out in Compton and actually rapping such lines as "That's the real obscenity/Black folks livin' every day/Is tryin' to believe a motherfuckin' word/Democrats and Republicans say."

"Rap music," Beatty told *The New York Times Magazine* at the time of the film's release, "is the language of social protest." Is he including all that stuff about "bitches," "ho's," and killing police? This may be the kind of political insight Beatty picked up as he prepared for *Bulworth* by hanging around with such rap impresarios as Suge Knight (now serving nine years in connection with an assault on two aspiring rappers). But the claim that violent, misogynist rap speaks for all blacks is a cliché of left-wing discourse—and, as such, a slap at the decent majority of African Americans. *Bulworth*, accordingly, is a 108-minute-long affront to black dignity. Its depiction of black life revolves mostly around drinking, sex, profanity, gunplay, and dancing. As Bulworth, Beatty wallows in this overdone slum world, seemingly unaware that his ostensible effort to call attention to the corporate-created plight of black America both depends upon and, probably, stimulates the stereotypical notions of his white audiences.

But *Bulworth* isn't much more nuanced when it comes to Jews and Asians. Jews are depicted only as the political moneybags behind big media's control of political candidates. Beatty even provides an offhand sneer at Jewish concerns about Louis Farrakhan's anti-Semitism. Also, the film goes out of its way to depict Senator Bulworth's fund-raising operation as a virtual money-laundering machine for shadowy "Chinese." At one point, Bulworth even remarks that "we get more money from [a group of Jewish media executives] than we do from the Chinese!"

This is all presented as the truth that Bulworth had not previously dared speak (until, in his sleepless state, he put out a murder contract on himself, and thus no longer had anything to lose). Other "truths" that flow from Beatty/Bulworth's mouth include fond reminiscences about Black Panther Huey Newton, followed by the question, "Why do you think there are no more black leaders?"

Needless to say, no character is introduced to present the view that there might be some reasonable middle ground between knee-jerk support for affirmative action and condemnation of it, or that society might have a right to demand greater personal responsibility even from the poor. *Bulworth*'s America—Beatty's America—is a place of pure polarization. There's no room, seemingly, for the art of compromise or moral nuance.

The film's surprise ending: primary voters actually love the crude new Bulworth's frankness and renominate him with 71 percent of the vote (he even gets a few write-ins on the presidential ballot). But, even though his own self-planned assassination is now off, Bulworth, suddenly a threat to, rather than a pliant tool of, corporate America, is shot dead by a sniper aided by what appears to be a black helicopter.

In its vision of an "America going down the drain" (another of Bulworth's rap lines), Beatty's movie isn't much different from many other alarmist Hollywood depictions of what is, in fact, a prosperous and increasingly generous society. Nor is the whiff of paranoid conspiratorialism unfamiliar in the age of Oliver Stone. What is simultaneously laughable and dangerous about Beatty's worldview is the assumption that all the country needs is an unbought leader willing to speak the truth about corporate dominance in our society, and the voters will at last be "aroused" to storm the ramparts of their evil government. I seem to recall that Jerry Brown ran a couple of campaigns on the same assumption, and he didn't get anywhere—though, to be sure, he's not as good-looking as Warren Beatty.

The dangerous part, of course, is that another name for a leader who tries to "arouse the populace" with conspiracy theories and inflamed resentments is a demagogue. And, all kidding aside, judging from what his movies say about politics, demagoguery is what a Warren Beatty campaign portends. What would be "progressive" about that?

CHARLES LANE

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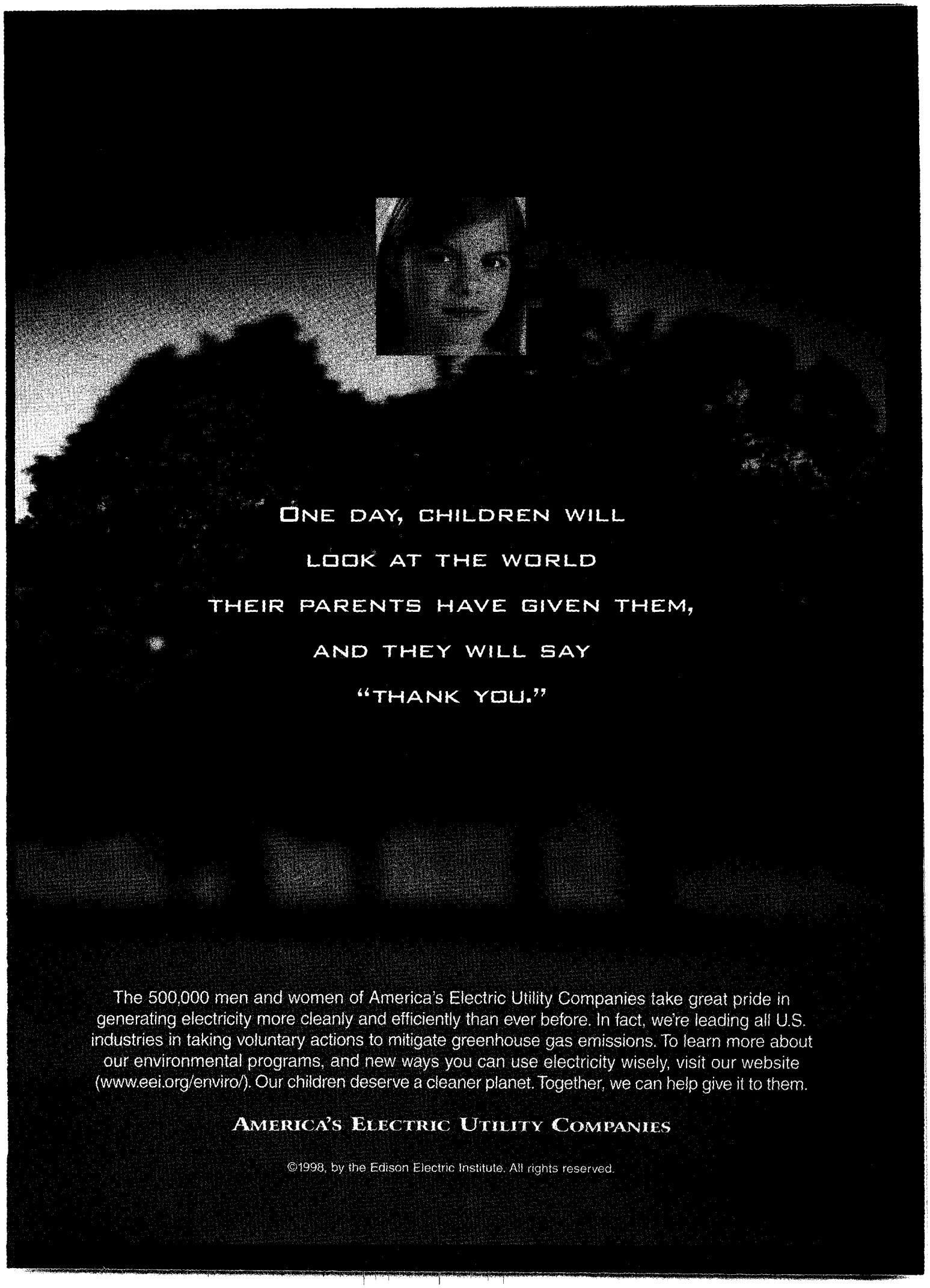

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CAMPAIGN JOURNAL

God Almighty

SOME DAYS, HILLARY CLINTON must feel that life is terribly unfair. After months of being pestered to explain why she continues to stick by her sorry excuse for a husband, the first lady, in the inaugural pages of *Talk* magazine, finally addressed the issue—and was promptly savaged by the media. Though Clinton has vowed not to discuss her personal life with the press again, it's unlikely she'll be able to hold that line for an entire Senate race. But, with a little prep work and a slightly different angle of defense, she can avoid a replay of the p.r. nightmare witnessed in recent weeks.

In turn-of-the-millennium America, publicly discussing your personal life is not a bad political move per se. We the people are devoted to psychic exhibitionism and public purging of conscience. Regardless of your achievements, the American dream is no longer considered complete until you've published a tell-all memoir filled with tortured, soul-baring passages about your weight problem, Percodan addiction, or past sexual encounter with a blood relative. As a nation, we long to feel one another's pain—or at least gawk at the graphic details.

Well aware of the public's appetite for personal revelation, Hillary took a calculated risk and painted us a picture of Bill as a psychologically tortured tot. Whether or not she actually connected the dots between the president's childhood scars and his adult shenanigans, she almost certainly counted on our doing so. And who can blame her? Hillary's own experience had demonstrated that the American electorate loves a victim.

These days, however, there is a big difference between being a victim and embracing the culture of victimhood. The idea that society should give people a behavioral pass because of their race, gender, or unfortunate upbringing has lost its resonance. The coin of victimhood has been devalued. We still pity those who have endured bad childhoods, bad marriages, or bad hair days. But just let them try to cite the experience as an excuse for cheating on their taxes or getting frisky with their babysitters, and we will not be understanding.

We are, in fact, currently neck-deep in the Age of Personal Responsibility. If this era has a motto, it's something along the lines of "Fire your therapist, find a hot mutual fund, and stop whining." The first lady initially flourished as a wronged wife precisely because she endured her humiliation so stoically; she did not whine or pule or treat her pain as license to behave badly. But, when she moved to dust off the abuse excuse for her husband, Hillary slammed head-on into the prevailing zeitgeist. The media had little choice but to pillory her—to the great delight of Republicans, who have long scorned the victim culture.

Much like Hillary Clinton, George W. Bush, in his rise from state to national political star, has come under increasing pressure to expose his private foibles to public scrutiny. At this stage, most Americans know that Bush spent a fair portion of the '80s rockin' the Casbah. He drank. He partied. He may or may not have gotten naked in public. And, though no one has yet produced a gram of evidence, more than a few folks suspect that W. has, in his time, put more than sinus medication up that patrician nose of his. When quizzed about his reckless youth, however, the candidate declines to discuss details. Those days have no bearing on who he is today, Bush insists. That baggage was left behind when, just after his fortieth birthday, George W. got right with God.

In its incarnation as a political force, the religious right has spent the past decade berating America for its moral depravity. As a result, the movement has developed something of an image problem. At its core, however, evangelical Christianity is about forgiveness and absolution. And the more wretched the sinner, the more glory to God when Jesus wipes away her sins. Believers emerge from the baptismal font purified. As the old hymn rejoices, "They've been washed in the blood of the lamb."

For a public figure with a less-than-immaculate conscience, religious redemption provides invaluable political cover. Even as you admit your sinful nature, you can offer assurances that the situation is now under control. Your life is in God's hands. Your invocations of love, forgiveness, and second chances will appeal to moderates repelled by the hellfire-and-damnation rhetoric oft favored by candidates courting the evangelical vote. Moreover, the group most likely to denounce a public figure for moral turpitude—social conservatives—is the one least likely to attack your religious testimony. Who among them has the right to challenge God's forgiveness?

The advantages of absolution have long been recognized by religious leaders, who, like politicians, occasionally stray from the path of righteousness. But whether caught with their pants down (Jimmy Swaggart), their hand in the collection plate (Henry Lyons), or some combination of the two (Jim Bakker), a key defense strategy for the fallen has been to acknowledge their sins, assert that God has forgiven them, and implore their disillusioned flocks to do the same.

Politicians have also been known to play the God card when the going gets tough. Most notably, following his incarceration for that unfortunate crack episode, D.C.'s ex-mayor Marion Barry based his 1994 comeback campaign on a message of religious redemption. Barry assured District residents that, while cooling his heels in prison, he had gotten right with God. Voters bought it, and Mayor Barry reigned for another four years.

With the ascendancy of George W., we see the God card being taken to a new level. In the past, it has been used largely for post-scandal damage control. (Witness the trio of clergy recruited to help Clinton weather the impeachment storm). But, for now, Bush is wielding it defensively, as a shield to deflect inquiries into his past. With his talk of compassionate conservatism and his denunciation of trash politics, Bush is the perfect pioneer for such a strategy. And, when paired with his professed concern that, if kids learn the details of his wilder days, they might misperceive such behavior as acceptable, Bush's refusal to answer certain questions appears downright saintly.

Elizabeth Dole certainly seems impressed and is taking a similar tack in her campaign. Lest conservatives question the career-oriented trajectory of her life, Liddy has already confessed that she was work-obsessed for many years. About a decade ago, however, Dole turned it all over to God; today, she is committed to the traditional values shared by so many of the party faithful.

As her Senate race heats up, Hillary, too, may want to follow George W.'s lead. Whitewater, Filegate, Travelgate, Monica—no allegation is too sticky for the Lord to handle. If the Republicans or tabloids seem hell-bent on resurrecting past ethics accusations, Clinton might even consider getting rebaptized on the campaign trail. The culture of victimhood is dead. These days—be it one's immortal soul or political career—Jesus saves.

MICHELLE COTTLE

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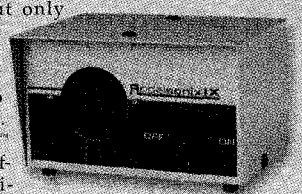

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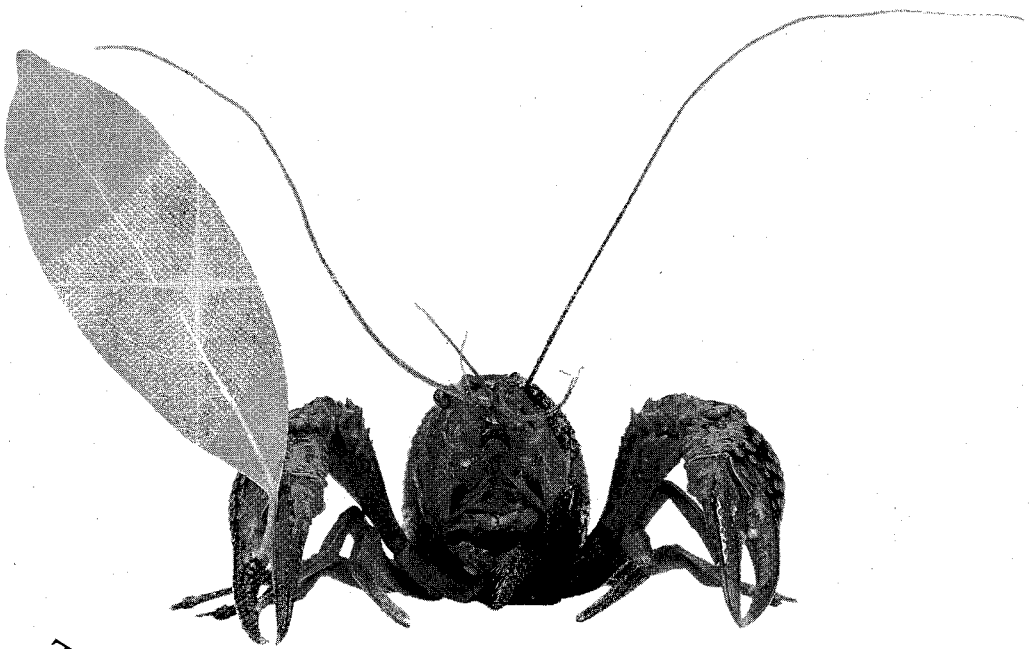

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National Journal

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The Origin of Speciousness

"TODAY THE EVOLUTION controversy seems as remote as the Homeric era to intellectuals in the East," though "in other parts of the country and in other circles, the controversy is still alive." Those words were not written last week, after the Board of Education in Kansas voted to delete almost the entirety of the subject of evolution (and also the Big Bang theory of the origin of the universe) from the state's science curriculum. Richard Hofstadter wrote them in 1963, in *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life*. And here it is still, anti-intellectualism in American life.

The good news is that the board did not insert into the curriculum the proposition that "the design and complexity of the design of the cosmos requires an intelligent designer"; but it was creationism nonetheless that triumphed in Topeka. The ensuing controversy is almost exhilarating, because it is having a clarifying effect. It is exposing, for a start, the speciousness of the arguments that are desperately being deployed against Darwin. The defenders of the board's theist pedagogy point out, for example, that (in the words of *The New York Times*) "since evolution cannot be observed or replicated in a laboratory, there is no evidence that it actually occurred." Or, as biology textbooks in Alabama—the boorishness is not confined to Kansas—instruct: "No one was present when life first appeared on earth. Therefore, any statement about life's origins should be considered as theory, not fact."

For the authors of this statement, only facts are true, and a fact is anything that may be established by the experience of the senses. There is something a little comic about these adversaries of science insisting that the most conclusive setting for the discovery of truth is the laboratory. They even call their cosmogony "creation science." But the empiricism of science was never as crude as this empiricism of faith. For we may be certain of many things that we have not observed with our own eyes, as we are certain, say, of the existence of Alexander the Great. Knowledge proceeds more by inference than by induction. Its debt to the mind is at least as considerable as its debt to the senses.

It is true, of course, that there were people present when Alexander lived, and it is true, obviously, that "no one was present when life first appeared"; but we do not rely only upon witnesses for our knowledge of Alexander, or of anything else that is distant in time or in space. The sources of knowledge are many, and witnesses are not always reliable. Anyway, no one was present on the first, and the second, and the third, and the fourth, and the fifth days of creation, and yet the creationists believe that they know what happened. That is because they, too, cannot subsist on their famished notion of "fact," and must resort to the argument from design, which is an inference—a dubious inference, but an inference. So even the anti-intellectuals use the intellect. They just use it poorly.

Truth is not established democratically. A proposition is not true because most of the population of Kansas, or the United States, or the world, believes that it is true. The religionists in American life like to adduce the authority of polls—96 percent of all Americans claim to believe in God or a "universal spirit," and 90 percent in heaven, and so on—as if the popularity of a belief has any bearing on its veracity. But this populist conception of truth (it looks a lot like what certain contemporary philosophers call the pragmatic conception of truth) is an old American illusion. "Not one in ten of those who accept the Bible as the Word of God have ever believed in the evolutionary hypothesis as applied to man," William Jennings Bryan wrote in 1923. "Unless there is some rule by which a small fraction can compel the substitution of their views for the views entertained by the masses, evolution must stand condemned as contrary to the revealed will of God." This confusion about the reach of democracy is still with us, and it represents a denial of the two most common phenomena in human intellectual history: error and ignorance. There were many false things about the world that everybody "knew" to be true, and there are many true things about the world that nobody yet knows.

But the roots of the new assault on Darwinism are not really intellectual at all. It is not truth for which the creationists hunger, it is meaning. "There's not meaning in life if we're just animals in a struggle for survival," a spokesman for Answers in Genesis, a creationist group, told *The New York Times* last week. "It creates a sense of purposelessness and hopelessness, which I think leads to things like pain, murder, and suicide." This is a little like Tom DeLay's frightened remark that the teaching of evolution was in some way causally related to the atrocity at Columbine High School. It is also a very damning admission, in that it admits that the moral and social utility of religion is what most recommends it—as

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if believers all behave morally and unbelievers all behave immorally. The creationists reject the theory of evolution for its emotional consequences, too. They do not like the cosmic loneliness, the spiritual inconvenience, that it implies. But the heart cannot refute the mind; it can only set the mind aside.

To be sure, in their insistence that the meaning of human life stands or falls on the truth or falsehood of evolution, the creationists resemble certain Darwinians who derive ethics from paleontology and biology, and have scientific explanations for the entirety of emotional and cultural life, and conflate the truths of evolution with a materialist view of human existence. These determinists prefer to ignore the fact that humanity, as Bernard Williams has remarked, is "a name not merely for a species but for a quality," a quality that cannot be reduced to physical or hereditary causes. But really the explanations of the determinist Darwinians are not scientific, they are scientistic; and scientism, too, is only a faith.

Science, by contrast, is not a faith. Science is a rational procedure for establishing truth by the critical examination of evidence, a procedure that is itself a great demonstration of human dignity. To delegitimate science in the eyes of schoolchildren, to teach them that a decent and orderly life cannot withstand the scrutiny of reason: this, like all superstition, is a counsel of despair, and an American disgrace. ■

NOTEBOOK

GREAT LANE: In 1979, when Lane Kirkland became president of the AFL-CIO, the American labor movement represented 24 percent of the nation's workers. When he died last week at the age of 77, four years after he was scapegoated by his own colleagues for organized labor's recent decline, the unions represented 13.9 percent of the American workforce. So how significant can a leader of organized labor be, really? It all depends on the leader's moral and intellectual force, as Kirkland demonstrated. He may have been the last American labor leader with a true belief in internationalism. Under Kirkland's direction, the AFL-CIO became a powerful agent for human rights and social justice in Poland, South Africa, Chile, China, Cuba, and elsewhere. He was one of the great democrats of his time, which was the time when democracies delegitimized and defeated Soviet communism. It was also the rattling time of "globalization," and Kirkland was accused of kindling to the adversity faced by foreign workers more than to that of workers here. Globalization has a way of making people think unglobally. But Kirkland rejected the new isolationism of labor, as he had rejected many other fallacies of the left. Rarely has a person of so much decency risen to a position of so much influence. American labor has not yet emerged from its crisis, but the evidence of Lane Kirkland's egalitarian resolve is all around the world. Globalization, indeed.

REICH REDEEMED: During its six years of existence, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum has emerged as one of the most significant cultural institutions in Washington. But the museum's success with the public has not been due to any particular skill or wisdom on the part of the Holocaust Memorial Council, which ostensibly runs the institution. The worst case of politicized mismanagement occurred in January 1998, when the council invited Yasir Arafat to pay an official visit to the museum. The idea came from Dennis Ross and Aaron Miller, members of the council and key members of the State Department's Middle East peace team—in which capacity they were trying to render Arafat more palatable to an American audience. Amid much controversy, the invitation was withdrawn, re-extended, and, ultimately, declined when Arafat determined that there was no p.r. advantage to be gained by accepting. Museum director Walter Reich was forced to resign, even though his only role in the fiasco was warning council chairman Miles Lerman against the Arafat invitation. Subsequently, Congress ordered an independent review of the management and governance of the museum, and now the report, by the National Academy of Public Administration, concludes that the museum's governing board meddles too much in the museum's operations and is too vulnerable to political pressure from the government that appoints it. The report specifically cited the Arafat affair on this score, calling it "an example of using the Museum, and the Holocaust, to serve political ends." The report also notes specifically that "[p]residential appointment of State Department officials as full Council members may be inappropriate because conflicts of interest may result." That vindicates Reich, and gives Congress a reason for reform.

SOFT ON TERRORISM: President Clinton has granted clemency to 16 convicted Puerto Rican nationalist terrorists (provided they produce written renunciations of violence). The prisoners are members of two groups, Los Macheteros and the Armed Forces of National Liberation, that have robbed banks, assassinated U.S. Navy personnel, and bombed dozens of locations in the United States and Puerto Rico. Eleven of the terrorists will go free immediately; two others will be granted early release, including Juan Enrique Segarra-Palmer, a key figure in the $7.1 million armed robbery of a Wells Fargo bank in 1983 (a crime the FBI believes was planned with the help of Cuban intelligence). Three others will stay in jail, but their fines will be waived. The White House argues that none of the 16 was directly involved in murder (though the Wells Fargo heist was intended to finance the purchase of weapons; a few weeks after it occurred, Los Macheteros fired a Cuban-supplied rocket at the federal courthouse in San Juan). It also says their sentences, which ranged up to 90 years, were excessive under the circumstances. Is it mere coincidence that the president's gesture has come just as Hillary Clinton is gearing up for her New York Senate campaign, the success of which depends heavily on a big Puerto Rican turnout in New York City? If not, we can only marvel at the condescension: the vast majority of Puerto Ricans do not support independence for their island, and an even vaster majority reject political violence. And what signal does Clinton's large-hearted gesture toward these thugs send to the Osama bin Ladins of the world? ■

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Creationism's political evolution.

Relatively Speaking

By JONATHAN ZIMMERMAN

HERE'S A POP quiz fresh from the front pages. Who said, "If they're going to teach [one side], then they should teach the other also and let a child make up its own mind"?

a. A black educator in Gary, Indiana
b. A Jewish spokesman in Coral Gables, Florida
c. A Pentecostal minister in Junction City, Kansas

The correct answer, of course, is "c." Reverend Thurman Young of the Faith Tabernacle was speaking in support of his state Board of Education, which voted 6–4 last Wednesday to remove most mentions of evolution from Kansas's science curriculum. Young does not believe in evolution; if he were in charge, he told *The Topeka Capital-Journal*, he'd bar the topic altogether. But, he acknowledged, Kansans differ sharply on the issue, so the state should accommodate all points of view.

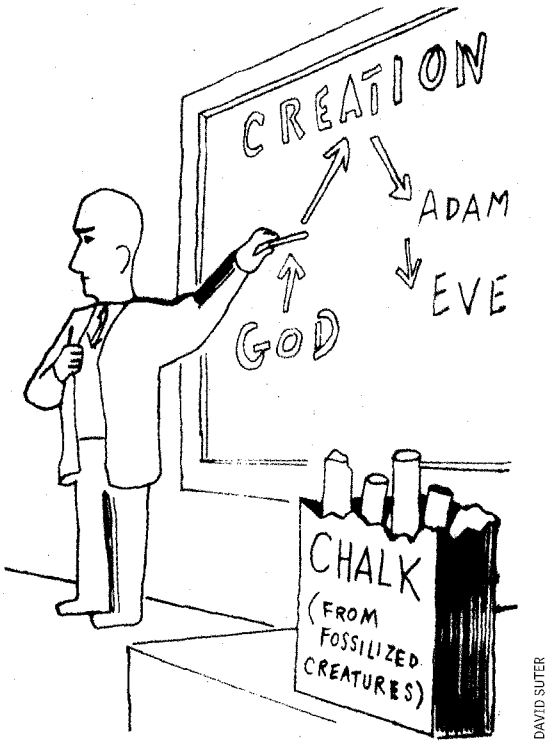
The Board of Education's decision capped more than a year of debate, which began when the board appointed a committee of 27 scientists and educators to devise new guidelines for science instruction. The panel's recommendations included more than two pages of material about evolution. But most of this information was deleted by board member and former Kansas Republican Party chairman Steve Abrams, who substituted a statement that the earth's biological complexity implies "an intelligent designer." Although some scientists wouldn't necessarily quarrel with the idea of an intelligent designer—the Big Bang, after all, was a pretty miraculous event—the theistic intentions of Abrams's declaration prompted protests, and the board voted to remove it.

JONATHAN ZIMMERMAN teaches history at New York University's School of Education and is currently writing a book about curriculum battles in American public schools.

But, at the same time, the board also agreed to drop all references to the Big Bang theory of creation as well as to macroevolution, the process by which one species evolves into another. The standards retain some material about microevolution, the process of change within a species; but these bland references pale next to the science committee's original report, which described evolution as "a broad, unifying theoretical framework in biology."

How can the Kansas Board of Education's defenders construe these developments as a victory for intellectual freedom? They simply contend that Americans adhere to a wide array of viewpoints on the origins of human life. By including evolution in its state curriculum, they claim, Kansas gave its imprimatur to one view and insulted the others. Better to leave the entire matter to local school districts, they say, where all perspectives can—or should—receive "equal time."

Readers will recognize this argument as the relativistic trope that has long been invoked by liberal supporters of multiculturalism and women's studies. But creationists, too, began using it as early as the 1960s. After the Supreme Court's 1968 *Epperson* decision, in which the Court struck down state bans on teaching evolution, Christian activists began to demand measures requiring schools to present the Biblical creation story alongside Darwinism. Meanwhile, a burgeoning network of think tanks and self-described "scholars" promoted "creation science," insisting that the fossil record and other geological data were consistent with a near-literal reading of Genesis.



DAVID SUTER

The Court dealt this effort a temporary blow in 1987, when it rejected a Louisiana law that would have required equal time for creationism in science classes. As in Kansas, however, activists simply shifted their focus from legislatures to state and local school boards. In Alabama, for example, the state school board requires biology textbooks to carry a disclaimer that "any statement about life's origins should be considered as theory, not fact." Countless local districts now direct science teachers to include "alternative explanations" or "different narratives" when discussing evolution.

In practical terms, these equal-time policies generally mean no time for evolution. Even in so-called "free" school systems, where instructors are ostensibly allowed to teach the subject as they wish, many teachers avoid or omit discussions of evolution for fear of alienating fundamentalist parents. After last week's action, which eliminated questions about evolution from student assessment tests, Kansas instructors will be less likely than ever to address the topic.

Suppose, though, that some mechanism could guarantee a full and free discussion of human origins in America's classrooms. For champions of equal time, a huge philosophical

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problem would remain: relativism. After all, supporters of equal time for creationism alongside evolution are generally the same people who insist that "situational ethics" are destroying America. In public schools, they complain, children are taught fuzzy, inconsistent messages rather than fixed codes of right and wrong. Multicultural curricula, especially, are guilty of espousing the insidious idea that there is no single Truth; there is only your truth and my truth, both of which usually reflect our different races, ethnicities, and genders.

When it comes to evolution, however, these single-minded absolutists start to sound just like the multiculturalists they abhor. Jerry Falwell now maintains that John T. Scopes should not have been convicted in his famous 1925 trial, because Scopes was simply "teaching both points of view—evolution and creation." Would Falwell support an equally open-ended approach to premarital sex? Or homosexuality? Or gender roles and family structure? Of course, a similar contradiction plagues many on the multiculturalist left. While liberals welcome the "multiple perspectives" offered by gays, women, and racial minorities, they scoff when fundamentalist Christians demand equal respect and representation.

Perhaps the real problem is that none of the activists on either side are being sincere when they claim that all they want is for children to formulate their own conclusions. Instead, the activists really want children to absorb their opinions. How many advocates of equal time for creationism really want students to be able to conclude that, yes, humans did evolve from apes? How many feminists would let a class decide that a woman's place is in the home after all?

We all claim to support "discussion," of course. But discussion with a preordained outcome isn't discussion at all; it's propaganda. Nothing will change until adults honestly encourage children to make up their own minds—about evolution and about everything else. ■

Moscow Dispatch

News Blackout

By Masha Gessen

Moscow tends to empty out in August. In anticipation of the long, cold winter and the political crises that always precede it, the city's movers and shakers, as well as its ordinary citizens, seek out warmer, calmer vacation destinations. But this month the crises hit a week or two ahead of schedule, when, on August 9, President Boris Yeltsin sacked the government, and, almost simultaneously, Chechen guerrillas (who, the government claims, are Islamist militants) crossed over into the neighboring Russian republic of Dagestan and surrounded several villages, threatening to turn a long-festering conflict into a full-scale war.

Masha Gessen is chief correspondent at *Itogi*, the Russian partner of *Newsweek*.

The politicians and journalists were forced to cut their holidays short and rush back to the capital. On Sunday, August 15, the heads of the seven parliamentary factions all appeared live on television in an extraordinary broadcast of Russia's most influential political analysis show. For more than an hour, they droned on about the vote on Vladimir Putin's nomination as prime minister scheduled for the following day, though Putin's approval was preordained. Finally, Grigory Yavlinsky, leader of the Yabloko left-liberal faction, said, "We're talking about inconsequential things when there is a war going on." His colleagues and their esteemed host nodded somberly, mumbled a few words about the need for decisive action against the Muslim menace, and fell silent. It's hard to blame them. They had no substantive opinions to offer, because, like everyone else in Moscow, they know virtually nothing about the situation in Dagestan.

A clear pattern has formed during the past week or so: information about the fighting in Dagestan comes in dribs and drabs throughout the day, with the later dispatches often contradicting the earlier ones. By the time the evening news broadcasts roll around, a sort of informational consensus is generally established, shaped more by journalists' instincts and intuition than anything else.

On the morning of August 9, for example, news agencies offered two important news items: a federal helicopter had mistakenly fired on a Dagestan police jeep, killing four people; and a different helicopter, this one carrying Russian general staff chief Anatoly Kvashnin, had come under fire. Later in the day, through the loyal Interfax news agency, the Interior Ministry denied both items, stating that the area where the policemen were allegedly killed had not been subjected to air fire and that Kvashnin was not in the helicopter when it was fired upon; the fire, it was added, was "accidental." The following morning, the daily *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* reported—citing no sources—that four cops had been killed and 17 wounded in the mistaken air raid.

Similarly, on the morning of August 14, Interfax, again citing the Interior Ministry, reported that there had been no fighting during the previous night. Several hours later, the agency relayed an Interior Ministry statement that, overnight, four Russian soldiers had been killed and 16 had been wounded.

Journalists who covered the 1994–1996 war in Chechnya are all too aware of how absurdly unreliable the Interior Ministry can be. Back then, the ministry's attempts at misrepresentation ranged from the expected—such as denying the existence of Russian army camps where POWs were tortured or falsifying evidence of Chechen troops' shocking brutality—to the crude and comical. In January 1995, for example, the ministry claimed that federal troops had seized the Chechen president's palace and placed a Russian flag on it. They even issued a computer-generated photograph to prove it. In fact, federal troops hadn't even reached the palace yet—much less taken it. But, although the faked photo did grace several front pages the day after it was released, it was quickly exposed as a hoax, because Chechnya was teeming with Russian and foreign journalists who could disprove it.

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The situation today is rather different. After the September 1996 cease-fire, Chechnya, and to some extent surrounding areas such as Dagestan, descended into a state of lawlessness. Since then, scores of aid workers and journalists—even those sympathetic to the Chechen cause—have been kidnapped and, in some cases, murdered. Almost without exception, journalists have stopped visiting the region independently. Now, when events demand coverage, Russian and foreign journalists alike are forced to travel with Interior Ministry troops, which makes them virtual information hostages.

MEANWHILE, THE MINISTRY'S approach to providing reporters with information appears to have changed little since the mid-'90s. Early in the week, the ministry claimed that Chechen fighters were "on approach" to two Dagestani villages; but a reporter for the daily *Izvestiya*, interviewing refugees in the Dagestani capital, determined that the Chechens had seized 13 villages in two or three different districts. Unfortunately, his alternate source of information dried up after a couple of days, when the refugee flow stopped.

The other option for reporters is to stay in Moscow, read the Interior Ministry statements on the wires, and compare them with the sparse but well-written reports that crop up on a website that appears to be Chechen but does not disclose its authors or sources. Not surprisingly, this reporting technique—which most Moscow journalists are employing—ends up fueling rumors and conspiracy theories. Last week, at least two Moscow dailies came out with articles suggesting there was a Kremlin conspiracy to escalate the war in the Caucasus in order to enable Yeltsin to declare a state of emergency and cancel the parliamentary elections scheduled for December and the presidential election expected next summer.

On its face, this theory appears absurd not merely because of the lack of evidence to support it but because it assumes a far higher level of organization than the Kremlin has been exhibiting of late. Still, it's not entirely inconceivable that Russia's scared and confused president, whose last three choices for prime minister have been secret police officers—a clear measure of his sense of insecurity—will use the Dagestan crisis for his own ends. Yeltsin does seem likely to push for a state of emergency. And, though the parliament may first have to pass a law codifying the decree, the president may not face much opposition—especially if the new law does not place undue restrictions on parliament. Certainly, Russia's leading politicians are all coming out in favor of a strong response to the Dagestan crisis. Even Yavlinsky, one of the harshest critics of the administration's actions in the Chechnya war, called this situation "unique in Russian history because, for the first time, international Islam has aggressed upon Russia."

Of course, the information about the Islamic and, especially, international nature of the forces in the Dagestani mountains comes from the Interior Ministry. But the Kremlin, should it opt for the most hard-line extreme, will be free not only of political but also of informational opposition—because there is no information. ■

The next O.J. case.

Inexcusable

By JASON ZENGERLE

WHERE HAVE YOU gone, O.J. Simpson? Five years after he embarked on "the run of his life" and gave us "the trial of the century," Simpson has more or less dropped off the cultural radar screen. Lately, his only newsworthy activity has been his house-hunting in Florida. But, while the O.J. circus is over, another Hall of Fame running back and sometime movie actor, Jim Brown, has been having his own legal troubles. On August 23, Brown goes on trial in Los Angeles for the misdemeanors of vandalism and making terrorist threats. The case stems from a domestic dispute this June at Brown's Hollywood Hills home. No, Brown isn't accused of murdering his wife (only of threatening to kill her), but the case's potent mix of race, sex, celebrity, and domestic violence issues has attracted the interest of several members of the old O.J. gang: Larry King, Geraldo Rivera, the Nation of Islam, even Alan Dershowitz.

On June 15, Monique Brown, Jim Brown's 25-year-old wife, called 911 from a neighbor's house. She told the 911 operator that her 62-year-old husband had "smashed things" and "beat my car with a shovel." She also told the operator that her husband "had a gun in the house, but he didn't use it." Monique Brown refused the operator's offer to send a paramedic because, she said, "He hasn't hit me." But, when the operator asked her, "He didn't hit you today?" she replied, "Not today." Then, when the operator asked her, "But there is a history of domestic violence, right?" she replied, "Yes." Finally, the operator asked her, "And he threatened to kill you today?" and Monique Brown said, "Yes." With that, the operator dispatched police, who found the smashed car and arrested Jim Brown.

The case against Jim Brown seemed clear—until Monique Brown recanted. She and her husband held a news conference during which she explained that she had "kind of overreacted.... I was in no harm. There was no threat toward me." According to Monique Brown's new version of what happened June 15—a version she has repeated on "Larry King Live" and "Rivera Live"—she had been suffering from premenstrual syndrome and, after picking a fight with her husband, called 911 in a fit of anger. She lied to the operator when she said Jim Brown had threatened her. As for the vandalism charge—which stems from the smashed car—Monique Brown, Jim Brown, and their lawyer, William Graysen, have claimed that it is unclear whether the car is Monique Brown's property. Moreover, they say Monique Brown had given her husband permission to beat the car with the shovel. This last claim was a bit much even for King. "You gave him permission to break the windows ... you said, 'Go ahead'?" he asked Monique Brown. "Yes," she replied, "'Go ahead,' and not just that but some other words

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that I wouldn't say on the air."

Prosecutors in Los Angeles, however, are having none of this. Lara Bloomquist, who supervises the Los Angeles city attorney's domestic violence unit, says that two-thirds of the victims in domestic violence cases handled by her office ultimately recant their stories. That's why the office now has what it calls a "no-drop" policy: even if a victim of domestic violence asks the office not to prosecute, the office will go ahead with the case if it feels the evidence warrants it. In the case of Jim Brown, prosecutors believe that it does.

As it happens, the O.J. case was a major impetus behind the city attorney's adoption of the no-drop policy. Prior to Simpson's actually being charged with spousal abuse in 1989 (he pled no contest and received a light sentence), Los Angeles cops had visited Simpson's house eight times to stop him from beating his wife, Nicole Brown Simpson. On none of those eight occasions did the police arrest Simpson, often because his wife refused to press charges. Jim Brown used to benefit from similar circumstances. In 1968, police accused Brown of throwing the woman who was then his girlfriend off a balcony—the cops found her semiconscious on the ground—but when the woman didn't press charges, the police dropped the case. In 1986, Brown was arrested for assaulting another girlfriend, but the case collapsed when, after Brown reportedly drove her to the police station, the girlfriend signed a form stating she didn't want him to be prosecuted.

Brown is quite angry about the no-drop policy, not only because it has led to his actual prosecution but also because he loathes Simpson—whom he was calling "phony" long before the rest of America was. But even though Brown's attorney, Graysen, has lamented that "ever since the O.J. Simpson case, the prosecutors and police in this city have had a very strict policy of overenforcement without discretion regarding family argument," Brown is relying on O.J.'s defense strategy. Just as Simpson claimed that when he did hit Nicole, he did it out of love—his suicide note declared, "If we had a problem it's because I loved her so much"—Brown blamed his beating the car with a shovel on his love for Monique. "She is the only person in this world that my emotions will allow me to go in and say, 'I'll smash these windows,'" Brown explained to King. "Because you're in love with her?" King asked. "Because I love her," Brown replied.

And, like O.J.'s lawyers, Brown and his lawyer have claimed that the case against him is a racist conspiracy led by the police. "It's a military action to take down Jim Brown," Graysen told Geraldo Rivera. "The city attorney's office does not prosecute white couples in the West Side of Los Angeles or the San Fernando Valley who actually commit physical violence against each other." Or, as Brown himself told Rivera: "The African American community in this country looks upon the police as the enemy. They look upon the prosecutor's office as the enemy.... We are here because of the politics."

Brown's use of the race card has had the intended effect of activating the old "Free O.J." coalition. According to an article by Charlene Muhammad in the July 20 issue of the Nation of Islam's newspaper, *The Final Call*, "Attempts to prosecute Hall of Famer Jim Brown on a domestic abuse charge [are] a further attempt to smear strong Black leaders...." Alan Dershowitz appeared on "Larry King Live" to defend Brown, plug his new novel, and offer some historical perspective on domestic violence. "Twenty years ago we wouldn't take at all seriously any allegations of domestic violence," Dershowitz said. "Today, we regard domestic abuse as so serious a crime that even innocence isn't deemed a defense." Dershowitz also took aim at the no-drop policy. "A woman should have the right to call [911] and say, 'Come out here right away. I need you to cool off a difficult situation, but I don't want my husband in jail,'" Dershowitz said. "When you have a no-drop policy, a 911 call becomes a nuclear weapon, and many, many women understandably will not call the police when it's essential for the police to be called." Of course, if it's so essential for the police to intervene in a domestic dispute, might it also be essential for the offending party to be punished?

Of course, one major O.J. player missing from the Jim Brown spectacle is Johnnie Cochran. Not that Cochran hasn't helped Brown before: in 1985, he successfully defended Brown against rape charges. But, apparently, for at least one member of the O.J. gaggle, time marches on. ■

Will the Internet make the record business obsolete?

Web Hits

By Katie Isenberg

In Northampton, Massachusetts, four guys in a punk band named Yanni Difranco dream of becoming rock stars. Their dream, of course, is hardly unique: American cities hum with the hopes and frustrations of thousands of local musicians toiling to capture the attention of entertainment-saturated audiences. But, lately, a new sound is lending an optimistic tenor to the buzz: the whirring of computer hard drives.

Yanni Difranco doesn't have a recording contract, but it does have the Internet—and a relatively new technology called MP3. Shorthand for Moving Picture Experts Group-1, Audio Layer 3, MP3 is only one of several new digital formats that compress sound recordings into compact, CD-quality files that can be saved and played on personal computers. The hallmark of MP3 is its accessibility. Whereas musicians must pay to encode and distribute their songs in digital formats such as Liquid Audio, anyone, with the help of software available for free on the Web, can make an MP3 file from any sound recording—whether it's the local church choir singing "Amazing Grace" or Led Zeppelin performing "Stairway to Heaven"—and post that file on a website. And anyone—again, using free software—can download the MP3 file from that website, store it on a hard drive, and listen to it on the computer's speakers. Or e-mail it to a friend. Or transfer it to a Walkman-style device that plays digital sound

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files. As Yanni Difranco has learned, consumers have been quick to embrace these options: some 3,000 people have downloaded the band's MP3s since it made the songs available online last March.

Stories like these have caused more than a few musicians, Web enthusiasts, and journalists to cast MP3 as a democratization of music distribution that could topple the $40 billion international recording industry. In addition to the very real threat that consumers will download free, pirated copies of an album rather than plunk down $15.99 to buy it on CD, traditional record labels face the prospect of losing their ability to attract talent. Some major artists, such as the rap group Public Enemy, have already defected to Web-based labels that release music online, and unsigned artists are relishing a newfound sense of empowerment. After all, if Yanni Difranco can sell its CD by posting a free sample on MP3.com, a popular website that features legal (i.e., not pirated) downloadable music, why should the band sign a restrictive recording contract under which it pockets only a relatively small fraction of the profit for each CD sold? According to its most vocal enthusiasts, MP3 promises to completely overhaul the recording industry. "Soon you'll see a marketplace with five hundred thousand independent labels," Chuck D of Public Enemy has said. "The majors can co-opt all they want, but it's not going to stop the average person from getting into the game."

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To be sure, MP3 poses some real threats to the big record companies. Online piracy has already proved a menace; last year, the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA), a trade organization whose members—which include all five major record labels—control approximately 90 percent of sound recordings made in the United States, sent thousands of informational or warning letters to websites that were offering unauthorized digital copies of RIAA members' songs. The RIAA has also spearheaded the Secure Digital Music Initiative—an elite coalition of music, electronic, and information technology industry heavyweights that has been working to develop voluntary technological specifications for every link in the digital music chain, from portable players to file formats that (unlike MP3) will protect music-makers' copyrights.

But, aside from the piracy problem, a number of people in the recording industry actually view the availability of music online as more of a promise than a threat. According to Scott Dinsdale, chief technology officer at BMG Entertainment (one of the five major labels), the Web gives record companies another channel, in addition to radio and MTV, for promoting their products. "We are very excited about [the Web] as a method of creating awareness," Dinsdale says.

Moreover, artists' ability to put songs online doesn't necessarily mean that people will listen to them. With the increasingly overwhelming amount of music available on the Web—as of July, some 18,000 artists had posted more than 100,000 songs on MP3.com's website—marketing, of the sort labels typically provide, may be even more effective in guiding consumers' listening choices. Heavily hyped filtering devices are already springing up on the Web: for example, *Rolling Stone* magazine's website, one of several high-profile music sites that solicit MP3 submissions from undiscovered artists, features a biweekly list of ten "rising music stars," which the magazine's editors rate on a scale of one to ten (Yanni Difranco scored 5.5). The Ultimate Band List, to promote its own MP3 online talent search, has gathered a particularly alluring group of "celebrity tastemakers," including Joey Ramone of the Ramones and RIAA president and CEO Hilary Rosen, who sift through submissions and select finalists. The prize? "[A] chance for a recording contract with a major label. Then, ultimately, fame, fortune, world domination, and the distinct honor of being known as the first digital superstar 'born on the world wide web.'"

Of course, this sorting process on the Web bears a striking resemblance to the filtering that record companies have been conducting since the inception of the music industry. As a tastemaker for the Ultimate Band List, Rosen recalls, she "spent two hours clicking on song after song" from a long list of artists, often based on "whether a song name was cool or a band name was cool. At that point, it becomes a crapshoot." The gamble is analogous to the one musicians have always taken—with similar odds of success.

MP3 enthusiasts are right to point out one important difference: without the existence of this relatively low-budget, standardized technology, the thousands of artists who submit their music to MP3.com, the Ultimate Band List's contest, and other websites would never get the chance to have their music evaluated, or enjoyed, at all. And, even if a band is not seeking "world domination"—just exposure within its hometown—MP3 and other compression formats allow artists to promote their albums with unprecedented ease. In a posting on an MP3.com online message board last March, company CEO Michael Robertson envisioned the emergence, with the help of user-friendly, affordable technology, of a new "middle class of artists that has never existed before."

But how interested in middle-class musicians would American music consumers be? In a message following Robertson's posting, one MP3.com visitor expressed doubts:

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"[I]t's just not press-worthy, it's too mundane, where is the scandal, the ostentatious rock lifestyle, the wrecked hotel rooms, the world tours, the outrageous interviews, the drug overdoses & all the other hallmarks of stardom?" Fantasies like these are powerful not only for fans but also for many musicians. As Tao Jones, the primary songwriter for Yanni Difranco (which aspires to nothing less than "world infamy or at least death by vomit") admits, "I'm really just a 30-year-old punk who can't seem to let go of his teen angst and confusing childhood." Even MP3 may have a hard time changing that. ■

Our silent war in Iraq.

Stealth Bombing

By PATRICK CLAWSON

WHAT IF THEY waged a war and no one noticed? In 1999, American and British pilots have bombed Iraq three times a week, hitting 360 targets with 1,100 bombs during more than 10,000 sorties. Yet the Anglo-American war over Iraq does not often make the front pages of even the Iraqi newspapers, let alone those in America. So far, the war has received little more than a perfunctory mention in either *The New York Times* or *The Washington Post*, and there's been practically nothing about it on television.

Yet Operation Desert Yawn is no haphazard campaign: it is a deliberate Clinton administration tactic that solves the smaller half of the Iraq problem—namely, how to keep Saddam Hussein in his box. By keeping Saddam contained, we are winning the battle. But we are still not winning the war, because we are doing essentially nothing to overthrow him.

The cleverness consists in breaking the mold of how force has been used against Iraq in the past. During the 1997–1998 cycle of Saddam-enhancing crises, each time America threatened to use force, Saddam generated international sympathy and inflated himself into a figure worthy of such attention. Keeping the bombing quiet has meant that there has been no opportunity for fawning diplomats and U.N. bureaucrats to offer Saddam concessions in the hopes of reaching yet another short-lived agreement. Instead, America has taken repeated military action without involving the U.N. security council, depriving Russia, China, and France of the opportunity to castigate the United States. Restoring the initiative to the United States, Operation Desert Yawn breaks from the paralyzing 1994–1998 obsession with holding together the mythic Gulf War coalition. The irony is that the new policy is better than the old one at reassuring our key allies: Turkey and Saudi Arabia allow U.S. planes to strike Iraq from bases on their soil, a step those governments found too domestically controversial to permit when the confrontations with Iraq were more openly advertised. In short, Saddam is no longer setting the agenda, gradually driving a wedge between the United States and its key allies; instead, Iraq is getting hit regularly without any end in sight.

The new strategy relies on a diplomatic fiction, namely that Saddam's provocations are causing the repeated bombings. In fact, what happened is that, last January, the United States changed the rules of the game. Take, for instance, the case of Iraqi radar. Under the old system, a plane could be authorized to hit an Iraqi radar site only if the site's target acquisition radar illuminated a specific plane—a clear indication that the Iraqis were about to fire. Now, if the Iraqis simply turn on the radar used to monitor whatever traffic might be in the air, U.S. planes may respond by hitting Iraqi communications centers scores of miles away. That's a pretty expansive definition of "defense."

Saddam is in a vise: he must respond to the bombings if he is to maintain the aura of invincibility essential to his republic of fear. Faced with a threat, Saddam's every instinct is to bluster, threaten, and lash out. America's preoccupation with Kosovo would seem to have provided him with a great opportunity to counterattack by, for instance, bringing down a U.S. plane and capturing a pilot. But he took only pathetic steps: for instance, moving short-range missiles to Iraq's Persian Gulf shore to threaten shipping (the U.S. took them out). The bombing shows how hollow his military is and how little his foreign friends will do to help him.

Saddam is on the defensive—a dangerous position for an intensely hated dictator. For the first time in his 20-year rule, he gave more than 20 speeches in two months on themes such as (on a call to senior officials in Basra) the need to "confront the influence of hostile information" and to "spare no effort in thwarting the plans of our enemies"—a rare admission of internal dissent. Indeed, since the February assassination of Iraq's leading Shiite cleric, who had begun to criticize the regime openly, large protests have taken place in several cities. Meanwhile, Baghdad has seen a series of bombings against buildings said to house the secret police and the Republican Guard. This doesn't add up to an imminent uprising, but it shows that Saddam is no longer riding a wave of confidence, as he was in 1998.

THOSE UNHAPPY TO see Saddam weak and isolated are using every argument for why the pressure on him should ease up. The favorite rationale is that only concessions to Saddam will enable the United Nations to restart its inspections for weapons of mass destruction (WMD), an argument that plays well with the "arms control above all else" crowd. In fact, the end of inspections was no great loss, since Saddam had shown that he allowed them to occur only as long as they did not threaten his WMD programs. Since these programs generally require facilities so large and distinctive that American spy satellites can find them, Saddam's nuclear and missile programs are somewhat more vulnera-

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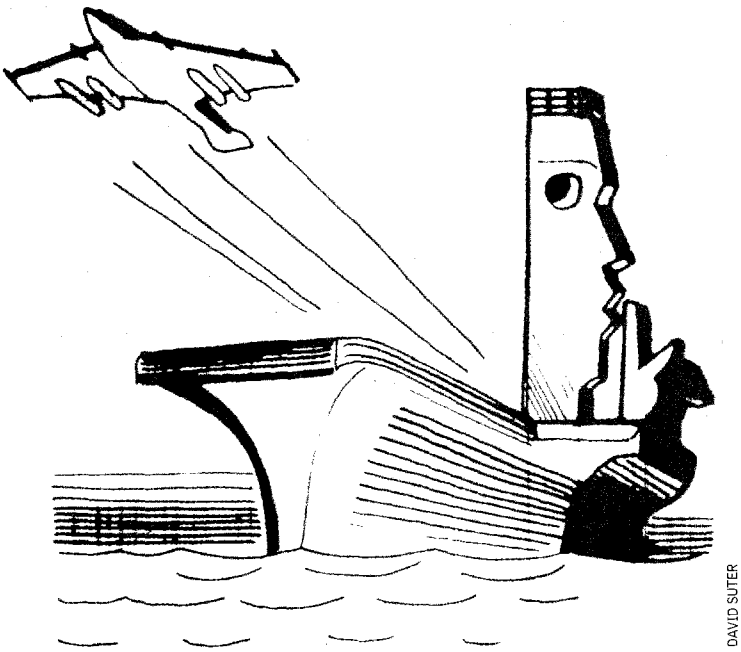
ble to detection and destruction.

The Iraqi chemical and biological weapons programs are harder to root out, because the factories that make those weapons can be used for legitimate civilian purposes: pesticide plants can make chemical weapons, and vaccine-producing facilities can make biological weapons. Under the program of U.N. inspections, those facilities were only monitored, not destroyed—they could always have been quickly shifted to weapon-making. Whether inspections are allowed to take place or not, the chemical and biological weapons threat will remain as long as Saddam is in power.

The real problem with the current U.S. strategy is not the end of inspections; rather, it is President Clinton's vacillation on whether or not to work for regime change in Iraq. By declaring that to be his goal in 1998 speeches to the nation, Clinton put the prestige of the United States on the line. From now on, the world will use a simple test to judge the success or failure of U.S. policy toward Iraq: namely, is Saddam still in power? Success is realistic if Washington commits to the effort, but failure is nearly inevitable if the administration sits back and waits for others to make it happen.



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It is in this context that we should consider the role of the Iraqi opposition. To be sure, the opposition is unlikely to defeat Saddam's forces in the field. But that is largely irrelevant. The issue is what must be done to crack the aura of invincibility around Saddam and his repressive apparatus. If Saddam's security organizations are spending their time worrying about the country's internal opposition, they will have fewer resources to repress outbreaks of the now-seething popular discontent. If emboldened protesters began to act on a wide scale, an active opposition could catalyze and coordinate an uprising, turning what would otherwise be a riot into a regime-threatening rebellion. Similarly, the more occupied Saddam's security organizations are with the organized opposition and spontaneous protesters, the less they can do to detect and stop coup plotters. Plus, U.S. containment efforts are strengthened when Saddam diverts time and resources from the regular military to deal with the opposition.

The United States has refused to take well-justified military steps to support the opposition in either the south or the north of Iraq. In the south, U.N. Security Council Resolution 949 authorizes the use of force if Iraq "takes any... action to enhance its military capacity in southern Iraq" (the so-called no-drive zone resolution)—but the United States very rarely hits the tanks and other heavy arms Saddam has moved into the south to use against the opposition. As for the north, Clinton pledged on national television that the United States would use military force to prevent Saddam from overrunning the Kurdish zone. But a July 29 letter to the Kurds from Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott said that America would do nothing to protect the Kurds if Saddam attacked them in retaliation for a planned meeting of the opposition National Assembly in the Kurdish area. To the opposition's credit and America's disgrace, the meeting may still take place, as scheduled, in Halabja—the Iraqi city Saddam bombed with chemical weapons in 1988. Halabja is near the Iranian border, which raises the prospect that Iran may provide the protection that the United States promised but will not deliver.

The Clinton administration's approach to aiding the forces trying to overthrow Saddam—talking big and acting small—has drawn the fire of both parties' congressional leadership, most recently in an August 11 letter to the president from Trent Lott, Joseph Lieberman, and others. Belying the critics who call it isolationist and unwilling to commit U.S. resources, Congress has been pushing money and authority at the administration, to little avail. The Clinton team has announced that it will begin using the $97 million authorized for the opposition in the Iraq Liberation Act, but it refuses to deliver aid for use inside Iraq according to the strange logic that the U.N. sanctions forbid shipments into Iraq. (By that reasoning, the United States is violating the sanctions by "delivering" bombs to Iraq.)

And the aid proposed is strictly humanitarian. The administration has not even agreed to provide broadcasting equipment to counter Saddam's propaganda. Only when Washington ships weapons will Middle Easterners judge the United States to be serious about getting rid of Saddam. Assistant Secretary of State Martin Indyk has said that "to arm the Iraqi opposition ... is premature." Okay, so get busy changing that.

The current military strategy for Iraq has a smart side—the stealth bombings—and a not-so-smart side: supporting the opposition just enough to put the United States' prestige at stake but supporting it too little to make success likely within a finite period. What is "prudent and effective"—the words President Clinton used in his December speech to the nation to describe how America will back the opposition in Iraq—is to steadily increase support as the opposition matures, with the United States always pushing the process forward rather than lagging behind. ■

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Colombia Dispatch

Guerrillas in the Mist

By LINDA ROBINSON

SAN VICENTE DEL CAGUÁN, Colombia

THE STEELY-EYED 20-YEAR-OLD was wearing olive drab and carrying a nasty-looking machine gun. He leaned through the open window of my taxi and demanded to see the driver's identification papers. We were on a dirt road in southern Colombia, deep inside territory held by the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, who are known by their Spanish acronym, FARC. As the laconic guerrilla shuffled through the taxi driver's documents, I tried to explain that I had hired him to take me to the leader of the local FARC column's mountaintop command post, from which we were returning.

The young gunman ignored me, quizzing the driver about his work history, his family, where he had lived. The driver rattled off the names of all the FARC comandantes he knew, keeping his eyes fixed on the road ahead; two men, guarded by FARC gunmen, were sitting there with their hands behind their heads. My concern mounted as these prisoners were loaded into a pickup truck and driven away. The guerrillas had recently executed eleven people in this area whom they suspected of belonging to right-wing paramilitary forces. Finally, we were allowed to pass. After we rounded the bend, my driver, his voice preternaturally calm, said, "He thought I looked like someone from another town, someone they're looking for."

Three days earlier, in early July, the FARC had launched the biggest offensive of its 34-year-long war against the Colombian government, attacking 40 targets all over the country. The rebels, using homemade missiles fashioned from cooking-gas canisters, had surrounded the town of Puerto Rico and captured the city of Doncello. Only now had army troops arrived. Up in the mountains, the FARC's Comandante Laurentino was redeploying his 1,500-man mobile battalion. I watched him as he stood on the porch of a schoolhouse perched on a lush green summit and barked orders into his radio. A fine, driving rain drenched the area. Laurentino's operation went off without a hitch: his fighters pulled back to the mountain with just one casualty, their retreat protected effectively (but illegally, under international humanitarian law) by a few hundred civilians who had been stopped by a guerrilla roadblock on the highway, where they served as human shields. In frustration, the Colombian air force dropped its bombs on the next ridge, killing 30 cows that belonged to a 68-year-old dairy farmer. "We're ruined," the farmer said. "I've lost millions of pesos."

In the weeks since, the 15,000-member FARC has kept up a steady pace of attacks led by mobile battalions like Laurentino's, the elite forces of this experienced and increasingly aggressive fighting force, whose ranks have tripled in the past two decades. The offensive has shattered official hopes, both in Bogotá and Washington, that the Colombian government can negotiate peace with the guerrillas in the short term. The guerrillas are now the de facto rulers of a huge swath of the country, and they seem more committed to maintaining their grip on power than ever.

UNTIL NOW, THE United States had left the conduct of the guerrilla war to the Colombian armed forces, although the Clinton administration had expressed concern about the FARC's role in Colombia's gigantic cocaine industry. Most of the world's cocaine is produced in the territory under FARC control. And the rebels derive several hundred million dollars a year from the trade by charging traffickers fees for protection of the coca crops and cocaine labs and for allowing precursor chemicals and drug planes to pass through the zone. But, in the past year, the administration has grown alarmed about the guerrillas' advances. "It's an emergency situation," says White House drug czar Barry McCaffrey, who is pushing for some $500 million in aid for Colombia—in addition to $289 million pledged this year. Aid to Colombia already surpasses the amount given to any country other than Israel and Egypt.

Formally dubbed "counternarcotics assistance," the aid will be used to create new mobile battalions of Colombian soldiers who will, in the words of U.S. Southern Command Chief General Charles Wilhelm, "lay down a security carpet" so the police can move in on drug targets without resistance from the rebels. One unit, trained and equipped by the United States, will be rolled out later this year, and the Colombian military plans to set up two more if Congress approves the aid.

As substantial as the contemplated increase in U.S. aid is, the magnitude of the problem is even greater. In the past three years, Colombia's coca cultivation has expanded by 50 percent, and the new high-yield variety that has recently been planted promises a bumper crop of the cocaine end-product such as the country has never seen. Making a significant dent in the guerrillas' bottom line will also be difficult because their drug-related income is not their only source of funding. The FARC and the 5,000-man Army of National Liberation, an insurgent group that operates in the north, made some $100 million apiece in 1997 and 1998 from extortion and kidnapping.

Even though U.S. officials steadfastly maintain that their goal is to fight against drugs, not to initiate another El Salvador-style counterinsurgency campaign, this semantic distinction will be difficult to maintain in practice. And, given the large, experienced force the Colombian units will be up against, the next question is obvious: how far should the United States go in its commitment to build up an effective army if the first, second, or third battalion's efforts do not weaken the rebels enough to force them to abandon their

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role in the drug trade and negotiate an end to the war?

The dimensions of Colombia's sobering guerrilla problem are little known to the American public. Covering 439,734 square miles, Colombia is a huge country, the fourth largest in South America. (By comparison, El Salvador encompasses 8,124 square miles, and Vietnam, the state incorporating both halves of the former North and South Vietnam, is 127,243 square miles.) About half of Colombia's territory is dominated by guerrillas; the government presence in the countryside is extremely weak and is virtually nonexistent in most of the south. The country is divided by three formidable ranges of the Andean mountains that run north to south. In the vast southern jungle and plains region, where the guerrillas are strongest, there are literally no roads, only rivers and scattered airstrips.

The fight that the United States is now backing into has been going on for 35 years, longer than Ho Chi Minh's forces had been fighting the French when the United States first sent military advisers to Vietnam. Colombia's current war is the legacy of a much older conflict, the bloody civil war called *La Violencia* that took 200,000 lives between 1948 and 1958. The combatants were partisans of the Liberal and Conservative parties, whose leaders eventually forged a pact that allowed them to alternate power. Manuel Marulanda and a small band of Liberals thought this constituted a sell-out, founded the FARC, and kept fighting. The army went to the FARC's stronghold, Marquetalia, in western Colombia and tried to wipe the group out. Only two of the FARC's leaders escaped alive: Marulanda and Jacobo Arenas, who was the ideological brain complementing Marulanda's aptitude for military strategy. The group's remnants fled to La Serranía de la Macarena, a beautiful, mountainous zone in southern Colombia. They have since grown into an octopus-like structure of seven mobile units and 61 fronts based in every state of the country.

The guerrillas' military prowess has enabled them to take de facto political control of much of this near-empty countryside. Colombian President Andrés Pastrana has been the target of heavy criticism for withdrawing the army from a Switzerland-size swath of southern territory in an effort to jump-start peace talks with the FARC; but, in an interview outside their main camp, La Sombra, a top FARC leader, Raúl Reyes, said, "It's no gift. We've always had units here."

Indeed, the rebels' encroachment has been building for decades. Reyes, for example, has lived in a FARC-held area for years; before he joined the FARC, in 1982, he was manager of a milk plant. The rebels' control in the demilitarized zone has become more overt, however. They frisk passengers arriving at the airport, man highway checkpoints, and generally lay down the law. Late one night, a woman came to their office in the county seat of San Vicente seeking help. In her arms she held a baby with a tumor growing out of his left shoulder. "Make my husband give me some money to go to the hospital," she said. "He's drinking in the cantina with a girl and won't leave."

Another forlorn woman hanging around the FARC office was the daughter of a shopkeeper from the neighboring state of Huila who was kidnapped by the rebels ten months ago. She had come to plead for her father's release because the family had paid part of the ransom but couldn't afford any more. After several days of waiting in vain, she returned home. Outsiders may call this just plain kidnapping, but the FARC has a different view. "All governments of the world charge taxes, and some people evade taxes. We're a government, so we have the right to make people pay," Reyes said. He's unconcerned about the negative image such criminal behavior creates. "We have a bad image of the capitalists," he shrugged. The rebels are also moving to consolidate their power; local supporters have called a general assembly to set up a new government in San Vicente and a popular tribunal to judge county officials whom they say are corrupt.

More than anything, southern Colombia is a political and military vacuum that the FARC has filled. There is no army presence in 140 municipalities; even school budgets are nonexistent. The little hamlet of Los Napoles, ten kilometers from the main FARC camp, runs its own school for 30 children, but there's no money for 80 others who are about to reach school age. In this environment, it makes more sense to collaborate with the rebels than to oppose them.

One of those collaborators is a farmer known as El Loco who lives just outside La Sombra. He and his neighbors are supplying the labor to extend the rough dirt road eastward into the jungle. The FARC organizes the work, leaving building materials and a giant yellow dump truck at his modest ranch with a cement floor and bare wooden beds. Virtually the whole household is involved, including El Loco's eldest daughter, who grinds corn and cheese for the morning breakfast of *arepas*, a type of pancake. Although it may not seem risky, El Loco and his family are engaged in dangerous work. They are prime targets for the right-wing paramilitary forces, financed by landowners and anti-FARC drug traffickers, that have been gathering on the fringes of the rebel stronghold since this spring. Such right-wing bands favor the classic counterinsurgency tactic of draining the fish from the sea: attacking civilians whom they suspect of supporting the guerrillas. And they are responsible for the vast majority of the country's massacres, which are running 70 percent higher than last year's level.

THE LOGIC OF war appears to have the upper hand in Colombia, and no one is sure what the price of peace will be. The conventional wisdom among many analysts of the conflict is that the FARC is simply fighting to keep up its lucrative alliance with the drug trade. But Reyes denies that "tax collection" has become an end in itself. What the FARC is fighting for, he says, is power. "The FARC isn't making war for war's sake, but for political reasons," he says. "We have this plan to achieve power, defined along two lines.... If the enemy wants to talk, we can advance through dialogue, but if they think they can get rid of us ... then we will go the armed route. The objective is the same, by whichever of the two routes."

President Pastrana still hopes that he can persuade the FARC to end its war by offering the guerrillas reforms and a shot at power through the ballot box. But that may only work if the FARC can be made to believe that it has no chance of winning the whole enchilada. At the moment, it seems, the group has little incentive to abandon its quest for dominance. ■

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The Republican candidates face the future.

Field of Fewer Dreams

By DANA MILBANK

Attention Presidential Candidates:
You need votes? I need a new roof. Re-roof my house and you have my vote for both the straw poll and caucus; aerate my yard this fall and you have my wife's vote too. Serious inquiries only. Call (515) 633-0684.
—A classified ad in *The Des Moines Register*, August 13

AMES, IOWA

THE AFRICAN COUNTRY of Mozambique sent a delegation of eight officials to Iowa last week on a "study mission" to observe the Republican Party's straw poll. The purpose was to pick up a few pointers for their new democracy's coming elections. But, after observing the straw poll myself, I wouldn't be surprised if the delegates returned home with the conclusion that, all in all, their old socialist regime wasn't such a bad form of government. For here is what they were exposed to in Iowa:

■ U.S. Senator Ben Nighthorse Campbell, wearing a ponytail, bandanna, black leather vest, and skull-and-crossbones belt buckle, leading 250 similarly attired, Harley-riding toughs to the poll in support of Texas Governor George W. Bush

■ Candidate Gary Bauer, lion of the Christian right, marching in a state fair parade in downtown Des Moines with a ten-foot-tall elephant on wheels and supporters on in-line skates singing songs about Bauer to the tune of the "Gilligan's Island" theme song

■ Senator Orrin Hatch, a late entrant, trying to boost his meager prospects by busing in Ames chiropractors who had attended an alumni meeting at a chiropractic college

■ Steve Forbes, the multimillionaire publisher, building a massive, air-conditioned tent and an inflated theme park; hiring Ronnie Milsap; and flying two blimps over his encampment—outdoing Bush and former Vice President Dan Quayle, whose dirigibles hovered nearby

■ Roger Staubach stumping for Bush, Karl Malone stumping for Orrin Hatch, and Al Franken recording it all for *George* magazine (Franken asked Bauer at a press conference if he was worried about a millennial apocalypse ruining the 2000 election)

■ The one serious event, a debate, canceled because only three candidates—Pat Buchanan, Hatch, and Lamar Alexander—agreed to participate

■ Large-scale vote-buying, with candidates paying a $25 admission fee for each of the 24,000 voters

But, for all that, the Ames poll, dismissed as unscientific and a poor indicator of the desires of the electorate at large, turned out to be more democratic than anyone expected. Nearly 25,000 Iowans took part—a quarter of those who will vote in the actual caucus next winter. In that sense, the poll deserved the primary-like status the press accorded it. The contest generated the kind of enthusiasm for politics not usually seen until much later in an election: *The Des Moines Register* listed the daily whereabouts of candidates so readers could meet them. On the day before the poll, the event was such big news that it shared the top of the paper's front page with an "odor alert" declared because of a "foul smell" in the city (from animal by-products, apparently, not journalists).

Whatever its merits, the poll has reshaped the Republican race in a fundamental way. Bush, who placed first, was confirmed as the front-runner, but he wasn't the real winner. Yes, the Texan shattered the previous record for total votes, but his victory was never in doubt. With a showing of 50 percent or even 40 percent, Bush could have clinched the nomination, short-circuiting the primary process. But, in the end, Bush got 31 percent of the vote, below his public opinion poll numbers. Suddenly, the primaries look competitive.

The beneficiary of Bush's somewhat lackluster result is likely to be Forbes, who now has a credible measure of public support to go with his personal fortune. He may well be able to spend his way into a two-man race now. Finishing in second place at Ames, he far outpolled Bauer, the other semi-plausible candidate of the religious right. If Forbes can consolidate conservatives, he'll make Bush's life miserable next year. After all, the conservative candidates in Ames—Forbes, Bauer, Buchanan, Alan Keyes, and Quayle—garnered a combined 47 percent of the votes, not far behind the 53 percent for the more moderate Bush, Elizabeth Dole, Alexander, and Hatch.

Cheering for Forbes to weaken Bush will be Dole and John McCain. Dole, the third-place finisher, will now be seen, along with McCain—who sat out the straw poll—as a viable, mainstream alternative to Bush. They both assume that the conservative Forbes, though he may hurt Bush, is incapable of getting the nomination himself. The poll also cleared the field of Alexander (who has dropped out of the race) and Dan Quayle, who is determined to continue as a sideshow along with Hatch and Keyes. For Buchanan, who had a fair showing with fifth place, it's now decision time. The Iowa Republicans clearly endorsed the big-money, free-trading internationalism of Bush and Forbes, giving Buchanan good reason to bolt the party, perhaps to run on a populist Reform Party ticket.

On straw poll day, I spent less time with the candidates than with the caterers. My theory was that the candidates who served the most lunch would receive the most votes. This

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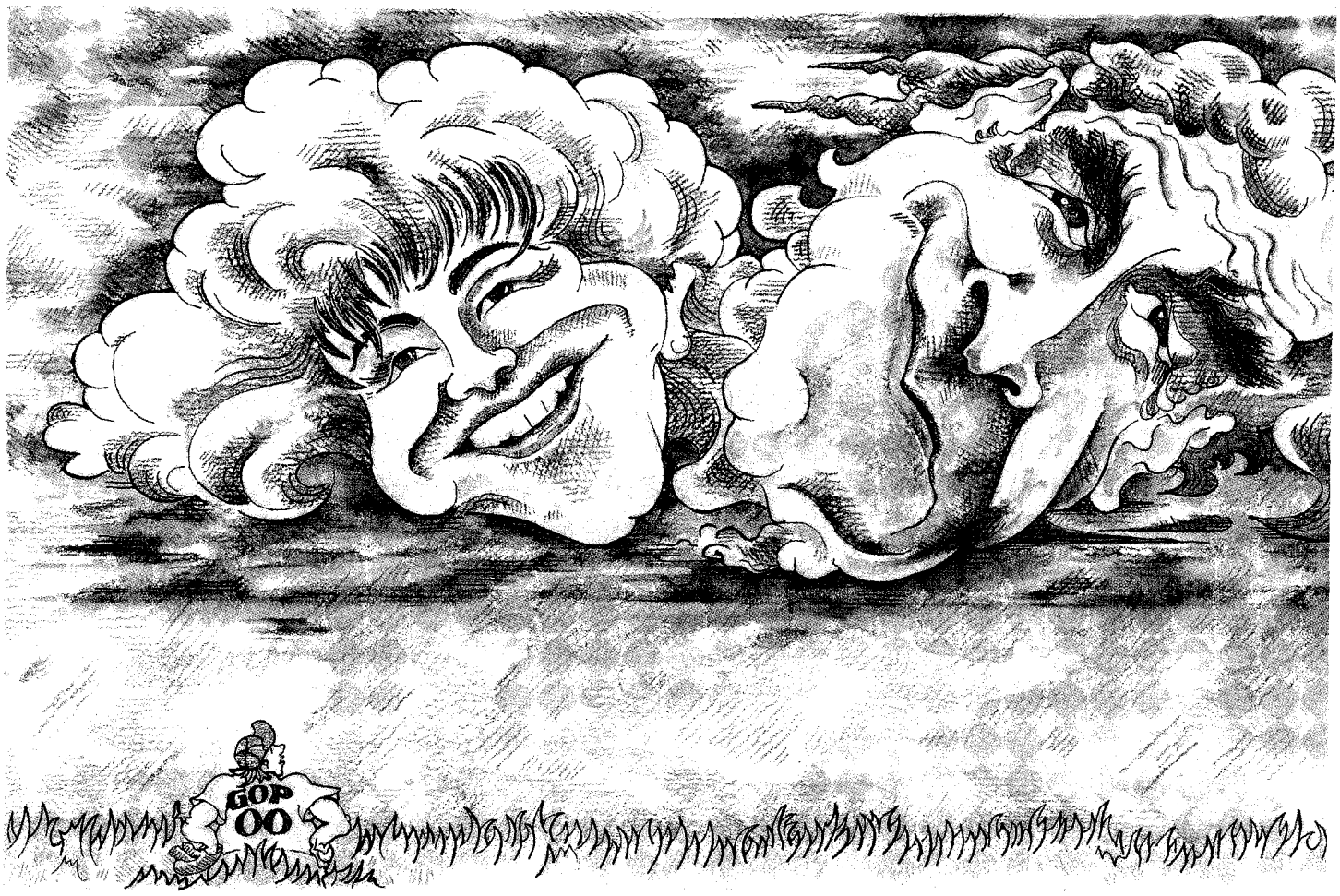

was not a simple calculation to make, though, because the candidates served different portion sizes. Forbes, for example, used 3,000 pounds of pork to feed 7,000 people, according to his caterers, but Bush tried to stretch 4,000 pounds of meat to serve 13,000 people by supplementing it with 1,150 quarts of coleslaw. Alexander's caterer believed 400 pounds of pork and 1,500 pounds of ribs would feed 3,500 people, while Dole and Bauer, who shared a caterer, together used a mere 1,500 pounds of pork loin. Buchanan served more than 4,000 sandwiches and 3,700 ears of corn, but no one touched an entire roasted pig. Nevertheless, I assembled a meal tally (see Exhibit A), which turned out to be a more reliable predictor of the results than conventional means, such as opinion polls.

With this information, we can draw the following conclusions about what Buchanan called the "main political event of 1999": (1) Dole and Bauer skimped on the pork loin; (2) many of those who ate Buchanan's corn and Alexander's barbecue did not vote for them. (That includes this correspondent, who was attracted by the shorter line at Alexander's tent.) But there are other, nonculinary observations that can also be made now that the Ames results are in. Here's how the Republican race will be reshaped by the straw poll.

Exhibit A

	Meals	Votes
Bush	34%	31%
Forbes	18%	21%
Buchanan	12%	7%
Alexander	9%	6%
Dole	8%	14%
Bauer	8%	9%
Keyes	4%	5%
Quayle	4%	4%
Hatch	3%	2%

(Figures represent percent share of total number of meals served in Ames, based on informal survey of caterers, and percentage of total vote in the straw poll.)

Bush:
The Front-runner is Mortal

Bush was supposed to host a "bass fishing" expedition on the morning of the straw poll, but there was little fishing and no bass. Instead, 300 supporters gathered around a murky pond, joined by actors doing tricks with firearms, a 30-foot fish tank on wheels, and a dozen camerapeople on a listing pontoon raft. The candidate emerged from a nearby lodge, accompanied, as many of us are when fishing, by various governors. As game-show music played, Bush stepped out on the dock and cast his line, then cast again, then miscast, nearly hooking the guy next to him, and finally cast once more before abandoning the endeavor. The whole thing took maybe ten minutes. Total Bush speaking time: 60 seconds.

The Bush campaign has used such soft-focus, photo-op events brilliantly so far, but the momentum is becoming more difficult to sustain. Bush's less-than-overwhelming victory in Ames may make some journalists reconsider his inevitability. Many reporters have been gentle on the front-runner, but if they begin to sense weakness, they'll pile on.

Also, the Republican candidates have started to attract attention for their attacks on Bush. Bauer got big coverage when he denounced Bush's "cavalier attitude," after Bush, in

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a *Talk* magazine profile, was portrayed as mocking a female murderer whose execution he had ordered. He also used the f-word. (Bush, not Bauer.) Even Hatch criticized Bush for the unproven cocaine-use rumors. "Bush needs to be more open," Hatch told me. "If he's made some mistakes, he's got to get them behind him." The Manchester, New Hampshire, *Union Leader* harshly declared: "The man has no ideas, and what's worse, he's apparently proud of it."

Actually, I'm inclined to disagree with the *Union Leader* editorialists. I still believe there is substance to Bush. But he is so inaccessible, so doggedly determined to stick to the script, that it's impossible to tell whether it's the man or the man's advisers doing the thinking. His stump speech, though smooth, has hardly changed by a syllable since June. It starts, invariably, with the introduction of his wife, Laura. "The best decision I've ever made was to ask her to marry me," he said at his first stop in the Des Moines area after arriving on the eve of the poll. "I'm not sure the best decision she ever made was saying yes." Then, at the fishing event the next morning: "The best decision I ever made was asking her to marry me...." That afternoon, I was walking by the Bush tent when I heard a familiar voice from within: "The best decision I ever made was asking Laura Welch to marry me...."

Bush would be wise to show more of himself if he wants to add depth to his support. For now, at least some of his supporters seem to be merely going along for the ride—literally. Some 250 motorcyclists joined a ride to Ames called "Bikers for Bush." But several of the bikers wore Forbes pins and T-shirts; it turns out that it was a motorcycle-rights group, and many of the bikers simply rode along. "They asked us to make a showing," said Connie Slonaker, a Forbes backer who rode in the Bush procession.

If Bush remains cloistered, the alternative is for the press to dog him with hostile questions wherever he goes—which can produce some bizarre results. When Bush landed in Des Moines, a reporter shouted a question. I couldn't hear the query over the whining jet engines, but Bush shouted back: "I accepted Jesus Christ. Billy Graham planted a seed. I'm a person who understands when I've got a log in my eye. I don't try to get a speck out of yours." This was the first religious conversation I'd heard on a tarmac.

Forbes: Bush's Conservative Rival

During the week before the Ames poll, it was impossible to avoid Steve Forbes. When I turned on the radio, there was the Forbes ad, before the farm report. When Hatch went to make a live appearance on the evening news in Cedar Rapids, there was the Forbes ad. There was even some trouble trying to schedule a candidate debate Friday evening because Forbes had bought a half-hour of the debate-hosting station's airtime for an infomercial. Driving down U.S. 169 in central Iowa, I overtook the two Forbes buses pulling out of a dirt road between two cornfields; on board were the candidate, his family, his campaign chairman, his pollster, his campaign manager, his communications director, a spokesman, the chairman of Sunglass Hut, and the usual travel aides.

Forbes, poor fellow, hasn't improved his performance on the stump a jot. He continues to smile and bob his head while

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greeting supporters, as if he were on a business trip to Asia. During his speech, the head-bobbing stops and the energy goes to his forearms, which chop mechanically as he makes fists, except for two fingers on each hand, which point straight outward. Even his aides have begun to imitate him.

But all of this hardly matters: the real work was being done back at Forbes's Iowa headquarters, near the state capitol. The campaign, which is rumored to have spent $2 million on Ames (Bush spent $825,000), called more than 250,000 Iowans and reached another half-million by mail. Staffers sent postcards and placed radio and newspaper ads to bring people to bus-tour events and to fuel calls to the campaign's 800 number, which overwhelmed the office's 17 phone lines. After participants signed up, they each received two letters and two calls. Another 300 were recruited on the Internet. All of the participants were entered into a database, and the Forbes staff, working 19-hour days for a month, developed a manifest and chose a captain for each of its buses. Once on the buses, participants watched a Forbes video and received a Forbes T-shirt and a hardcover copy of the candidate's new book.

The coordinated effort apparently worked. On straw poll day, thousands wearing orange Forbes T-shirts crowded the Forbes site. Inside the arena, Forbes's campaign launched an absurd display: "Stars and Stripes Forever" played while confetti and balloons dropped, sparklers and fireworks were ignited, and horns blew. The balloon drop turned out to be a blunder, because other candidates' staffers popped the balloons while Forbes spoke. The place sounded like a bag of popcorn in the microwave. But the voting, fortunately for Forbes, was mostly over before his fiasco on the floor.

Dole and McCain: Mainstream Alternatives

Senator John McCain, who skipped the straw poll, picked up Dan Quayle's South Carolina advisers when they defected after Quayle's flop in Ames. McCain denounced the poll as a sham, concentrating instead on New Hampshire. It's far too early to know whether that tactic will work, but this much is clear: Dole has kept pace with McCain as the mainstream alternative to Bush, should he stumble.

Dole's strong showing in Iowa is the work of what she calls her "invisible army" of young professionals, who are wealthy, well-educated, and, in most cases, women. A few days before the vote, I met some of them at a Dole reception for businesswomen held in West Des Moines. Dole, not terribly spontaneous on the stump, was actually lively here. She put in a sisterly quip about Bob Dole ("he's home making the bed") and won the biggest applause for a line demanding 100 percent deductibility of health insurance premiums for the self-employed. After her speech, the 60 women attending presented her with a doll wearing a T-shirt emblazoned with the slogan SOMEDAY A WOMAN WILL BE PRESIDENT. Dole's female supporters would deliver a more important gift at the straw poll: 45 women from local chapters of the National Association of Women Business Owners and the Business and Professional Women would fill a bus to Ames for her. "I've never done this before," said Kathi Koenig, one of the organizers.

Dole continues to get no respect from the press. Part of this, no doubt, is plain old sexism. One reporter, returning from a one-on-one interview with Dole on her campaign bus, told his colleagues, "She looks great naked." But there's also a legitimate beef to make about her unwillingness to answer questions. When I started talking with her about the upcoming straw poll, she replied: "Well, we're having a great time. Isn't this a wonderful state? Great people." She pointed to the horizon. "Isn't this beautiful? The rain cleared. That's good. Well, they need the rain. But maybe after the parade. Isn't it beautiful?" You can just see Bob listening to this over breakfast while reading his newspaper, muttering, "Whatever."

Still, I must confess: I like Dole more each time I see her. She seems, over time, a fetching combination of the maternal, the ordinary, and the Thatcheresque. Yet her poor image among opinion-makers caused her to be underestimated in Ames. Her tent wasn't nearly as spirited as Buchanan's, with its whooping peasants. At one point, supporters complained that her music was too loud. A DOLE ROCKS banner on stage seemed to be hung in irony. Inside the arena, Dole didn't get much of a reception; the real cheers came when her husband joined her onstage. So, almost everyone in the place was astonished when she came in a strong third. Soon, the reason was revealed: two-thirds of her supporters were women. They came, voted, and left.

Buchanan and Bauer: Populist Irritants

Buchanan made few campaign stops in Iowa before the Ames poll, so it's telling that one of them was at a farmer-owned ethanol plant in Blairstown. After the obligatory photo-op with guys in hard hats, Buchanan launched into an attack on big agricultural concerns. With his shirt ripped and his dress shoes muddy, Buchanan lambasted the "Hollywood lawyer" (Mickey Kantor) and "some academic" (Charlene Barshefsky) who, he claimed, run Clinton's trade policy. Thus did he stake his populist claims: anti-big-business, anti-Hollywood, anti-lawyer, anti-academic.

Buchanan aims to be the last friend of the working stiff in either party this year; the problem is, there aren't many Republican working stiffs. When I remarked to him that there were plenty of blue-collar Democrats who had no way of expressing support for him in a GOP primary, he replied: "There sure are." Buchanan did nothing to dismiss the third-party talk when we spoke; the night before, he'd said on TV that he had "impure thoughts" about bolting from the GOP. Conventional wisdom says that Buchanan, if he joins the Reform Party, will hurt Bush in the general election by stealing the social conservatives, but I bet he would steal an equal number of blue-collar workers from Gore or Bradley.

As if to underscore that point, six tractor-trailers and about 400 Teamsters joined the Buchanan tent at the Ames straw poll. The union had bought tickets for its members, and, while the Teamsters didn't officially endorse Buchanan, he was clearly their man. Buchanan, drawing cheers from the truckers, decried the "big banks" trying to "deindustrialize America" before turning to the topic of Mexicans. "You put Pat Buchanan in the White House, and we'll put that border

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back up, and those trucks will never enter the United States of America," he said. The Teamsters, many of them Democrats, then marched over to vote.

The race's other populist, Bauer, was able to place fourth in Ames by rallying church groups. His 21-year-old daughter has been lobbying youth groups across Iowa, and the campaign has advertised on Christian radio. Bauer, who headed the Family Research Council, a Christian interest group, also has benefited from the infrastructure of the group's state affiliate, the Iowa Family Policy Council.

A diminutive figure himself, Bauer makes his stump speech about—what else?—the little guy. "The littlest guy of all," he says, is the unborn child, and the "second littlest guy" is the family farmer. But somehow it is difficult to picture Bauer as a serious prospect. He simply doesn't have the resources to contend with Forbes to be the conservative challenger to Bush. Bauer, who wears an impish grin, does seem to possess a rare sense of self-awareness. When his volunteers-on-wheels sang melodies at the state fair parade, Bauer walked away, embarrassed. "I can't believe I'm actually doing this," he said. "I'm standing in the middle of the street and there are people singing songs with my name in [them]."

Keyes, Quayle, Alexander, and Hatch: The Irrelevancies

The goal of any candidate is to avoid winding up like talk-show host Alan Keyes, a political nonentity who seems to be running so he can rant in front of crowds. At Ames, he shouted past his time limit, continuing to holler and gesticulate madly even after his microphone was turned off.

In danger of joining the Keyes category is now Quayle, who, painfully, polled even lower than Keyes. It was obvious something was wrong early in the week, when just 15 farmers showed up to talk with Quayle at a farm event and the only camera waiting when he arrived was one from PBS. The event was five days before the poll, and Quayle already sensed trouble. "I can't imagine any campaign deciding to stay in or get out based on the straw poll," he said. "This is a straw poll, and I emphasize the word 'straw.'" The crowds grew slightly for Quayle during the rest of the day, but people seemed more curious than devoted. A columnist from the Cedar Rapids paper thumbed through the sign-in list at a Quayle reception in that city and said, "I guess if you've got an endangered species on your property, you want to show him off."

Alexander, who gambled everything on Ames and lost, has taken a more dignified route: he quit. The candidate was reportedly upset by my profile of him in TNR, which depicted him partially nude and was described by *The New York Times* as an "obituary." Actually, the piece was sympathetic to Lamar's quest, a noble but doomed endeavor to run a grassroots campaign at a time when money is everything. Bush spent just ten days campaigning in Iowa, but Alexander, who spent 39 days in the state, finished a distant sixth. Alexander knew this was happening, and his last day of campaigning before the poll, at the Iowa state fair, had the whiff of a valedictory. He took a turn as "honorary chef" at the Iowa Pork Producers tent and played "God Bless America" on the piano for fairgoers. At the Republican booth, I picked up an invitation to his straw poll festivities, written during happier times. "This campaign's really cooking!" it said.

The other irrelevancy is the usually relevant Hatch, who had been counting on two constituencies to get him through the straw poll: Mormons and chiropractors. Both, he found out, are insufficient supporters. There are about 16,000 Mormons in Iowa, but not many of them came to the straw poll for Hatch. On the other hand, "there are 1,200 chiropractors in [Iowa]," all of them of voting age, said Hatch spokesman Jeff Flint. "Our first contacts in many of these places are chiropractors. At one event, the chiropractors started going wild." Hatch's staff says the back-crackers like him because his health insurance legislation has helped them qualify for reimbursement from insurance companies; I suspect it has more to do with his ramrod posture. The chiropractors were indeed a force at the straw poll. "I think we probably got two hundred," Flint said.

Unfortunately for Hatch, he failed to motivate others in similar proportions. He placed dead last among the participants. And yet, there he was on the coliseum floor after the tally, claiming victory. "New Candidate Hatch Has Solid Iowa Showing," read a statement from his campaign, clearly printed before the results came out. "He exceeded expectations considerably." Really? With two percent of the vote? I asked Flint what the expectations had been. "One percent," he said.

As the tally board, initially concealed by a blue cloth, was uncovered, Bill Dal Col, Forbes's campaign manager, watched anxiously behind sunglasses, holding a pad. "Yeah! Thank God!" he declared on seeing the results. "Technology works!" Greg Mueller, the campaign's communications director, turned to Dal Col. "I'll take that, brother," he said. Rick Segal, Forbes's Internet man, hugged Dal Col. Within seconds, the spin had begun. "It shows it's a two-man race," said Mueller. "For the first time, it's the establishment that's splintering," said Dal Col. "It's gonna be a rough night in Austin," said pollster John McLaughlin.

Next came the Dole spinners, who rushed to the coliseum floor to remind everybody that Dole had spent only $250,000 on the poll. Tony Fabrizio, Dole's top strategist, said he was "thrilled." Bush "won, but he didn't dominate this field." Finally, the Bush team joined the action on the floor with some counterspin. "The real winner is the Democratic process," said Karen Hughes, Bush's communications director. "We did this in sixty-three days," declared top strategist Karl Rove. One Bush man, told that journalists were viewing the vote as a Bush setback, responded with the sort of expletive that so recently got Bush himself into trouble.

But the Forbes campaign got the best of the spin session. The candidate himself emerged for a victory lap, drawing a scrum of a couple hundred. "We're going to win the nomination," he declared. "I am the conservative alternative." Then, young Forbes aides leaped to the stage to pose for triumphant photographs around the chart with the vote tally. It must have appeared to the Bush folks, for just a moment, as if the Visigoths had sacked Rome. ■

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Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Fade-out?

WE LIVE IN an age of endings. We have heard about the end of ideology, the end of history, the end of the novel, etc., for each of which impressive arguments were advanced. Now arrives the end of film—not of cinephilia, a matter previously discussed, but of the film medium itself as we know it. The arguments in this case are not abstract or ideational: they are matters of technology, many of which are already proved.

This subject has been reported sketchily here and there, but at last it is fully addressed—by Godfrey Cheshire, the film critic of the *New York Press*, in a two-part article (issues of July 26-August 3 and August 4-10). "The Death of Film/The Decay of Cinema," in its several thousand words, is more important than most recent books I have seen on the current state of film, and it certainly calls for more discussion than do those books.

Cheshire, informed in film history and coolly impassioned, begins with a definition of terms: "film refers to the traditional technology of motion pictures," "movies here refers to motion pictures as entertainment," "cinema refers to movies understood (and practiced) as an art." The weight of his essay is on the first of these, but inevitably the other two are also involved.

"Film, like the telegraph and the Gatling gun, is nineteenth-century machinery," says Cheshire, underscoring the fact that, despite improvements and the development of sound and color, the technology of film has fundamentally remained the same for a century: photography and the projection of photographs. This is changing. In the future, he maintains with plentiful examples, film will not be anything like what we now call film: it will consist of electronic images digitally managed and beamed via satellite to theaters.

"The original picture is converted to digital information, which reconverts as three colors that are beamed through the projector's lenses and recombined on the screen. In late June, 1999—a date to set beside May, 1895 [when films were first shown to a paying public in the United States] among little-heralded sea changes in the technologies of popular culture—the new system went on display in Los Angeles, New Jersey and New York." Cheshire has seen *An Ideal Husband* thus conveyed and projected, and as a "videophobe," he has to confess that it looked "great."

The advantages of this system are clear: it eliminates the cost of making and shipping individual prints—sometimes thousands of prints of one film—and it also eliminates the damage that happens to prints, breaking and snipping and scratching and general wear and tear. (Also, I'd note, it lessens the chances for sloppy projection, the slowness in changing reels, the muzzy focus, the wacky sound.) The hundredth projection via beaming would not be in any way worse than the first.

But there are prices to be paid. Films will soon be made with "computer-generated imagery" (CGI) to facilitate beamed distribution, and CGI makes it very easy to alter films. If a film doesn't do well at the box-office in a Friday opening, says Cheshire, "there can be a new version ready for Saturday's matinées. And if that doesn't work, another version for Sunday." What this possibility does to the idea of a filmmaker's vision is chilling. The venerable concept of textual integrity, derived from literature, which even now has a will-o'-the-wisp aspect in the film world, begins to verge on the absurd.

Cheshire thinks that this new system of distribution predicates a lowered level of film production, that theaters will be filled with the equivalents of the most banal TV programs—game shows, scruffy talk shows, etc., done more lavishly. I can't see that this automatically follows. First, let's note that the general level of films now is not dizzyingly high; second, why would the audience for low-grade TV go to a theater and buy tickets as long as comparable stuff, even if not as huge or as garish, is available at home, free or for cable charges? The networks would have to conspire with the motion-picture studios to keep popular shows off the air so that the public was forced into (high-priced) theaters in order to see them. In our present era of merger-madness, this is not flatly inconceivable, but it might well bring about government action. Anyway, things will be bad enough if the general level of film programming merely stays the same as it is now.

In any case, for me the greater, more spirit-shaking threat is the matter of CGI, which already is commonly used to touch up traditional filmmaking. It's common knowledge that, for just a few instances, the heads of the two leading actors in *Titanic* were imposed digitally on the bodies of doubles in some of the rough action scenes, and that figures were inserted digitally (by the producers) in *Eyes Wide Shut* to mask copulatings in the orgy sequence and thus ensure an R rating. When CGI becomes the rule, what will happen to actors, to acting? Actors may be essential as models, but what people of personality and talent will make a practice of supplying their persons and performances as raw material for digital deconstruction and re-assembly? If talents are not attracted, who will do the "preliminary" performances for the first draft of the film? Will live actors become superfluous? If so, will audiences develop affection and response for fabricated actors? If they do, whether those performers are remodeled real people or concoctions from scratch, will Technician A be hailed as the creator of a better Julia Roberts and Technician B for a super De Niro? In short, what will become of, in Cheshire's sense, cinema?

That all this can happen is now a matter of fact; that it will happen is a matter of probability. So much money can be saved, as against the present system, and made, as per the new one, that the odds against change are small. Some filmmakers would very likely continue in the present way, particularly the so-called independents, firstly, because the changeover will be expensive and independent filmmakers won't be able to afford it, and, secondly, because most of them are artists, not scions of George Lucas who think of film basically as a technological lab. Nonetheless, prepare. Cheshire says: "If you have a child who is a toddler, the chances are excellent that you will one day have to explain what film was, and how different theaters were before digital projection brought live TV . . . and a dazzling array of other novelties into them."

All of Cheshire's points cited above, and others, are vigorously explored in his essay. We can soothe ourselves with the fact that prophecies, even when as well-grounded as these, rarely eventuate precisely. But it

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seems quite likely that film as we have known it has had its primacy. It will continue, just as the composition and the performance of opera continues though opera is no longer the immense public attraction that it was in past centuries. Film as we know it will possibly need as much cosseting as opera now needs.

What will happen, I have to wonder, to the new directing talents that could blossom only in our kind of film? Conjecture that Griffith or Eisenstein had been born fifty years earlier, before film's invention, and what would history know of a mediocre stock-company actor-playwright or a moderately gifted theater designer-director? As for film acting, I can only shiver for its future.

An irony overarches this whole matter. Film was the first art born out of technology, the first humanist cultural enterprise to arise from the onrush of science in the nineteenth century. Now, a hundred years later, a new technology threatens to swallow that humanist technological enterprise. The souls of those old-time theater folk who lamented the arrival of film—as a threat to their profession—may be smiling grimly at what they see as poetic justice. ■

Jed Perl on Art

The Death of Pierrot

THE CENTENARY OF Aubrey Beardsley's death in 1898 did not pass unnoticed. In London last fall, the Victoria and Albert mounted a major retrospective; and quite a few new books have appeared, among them a monograph by Stephen Calloway, who organized the V&A show, and a new biography by Matthew Sturgis. Still, I find it difficult to escape the impression that this centenary has come and gone without much more than a whimper. Could it be that Aubrey Beardsley, who was a scandal in the 1890s and a sensation in the 1960s, is humdrum in the 1990s? Could it be that this master draftsman's deliciously unsettling conjugations of sexual daydream, theatrical fantasia, and near-abstract visionary design have lost their appeal?

Even in our own jaded '90s, Beardsley's illustrations for *Lysistrata* might be expected to get people talking. What other artist has dared to bring such a dashingly elegant tell-it-like-it-is approach to images of a cupid gloatingly aroused as he powders a lady's huge behind, or a shriveled old man cheerfully fingering the shoulder-high erection of a long-haired young hunk? Male pubic hair was nothing new in art when Beardsley was working on *Lysistrata* in 1896, but only Beardsley had the wit to render that hunky Spartan Herald's dark hair as a rococo abstract silhouette. What gives Beardsley's designs their edge—and make no mistake about it, the edge is still sharp—is his way of literally dotting every I and crossing every T as he plots the twists and turns of his fantasies. The shock is not that this is porn; the shock is that Beardsley trumps the porn and achieves his own kind of zany plangency. His lucidity is spooky.

The Lysistrata illustrations are among Beardsley's most sexually explicit work, and publishers still shy away from reproducing them. If Beardsley had had his way, the original designs would have been destroyed at the time of his death in 1898, when the twenty-five-year-old genius had converted to Catholicism and was regretting some of his earlier publishing adventures. Yet even his pictures of far more innocent goings-on can have an aura of disquieting possibility. In 1896, Beardsley created a drawing for *The Savoy* in which a beautifully dressed young woman and an equally elegant boy, who might be her younger brother, set off into the woods. Here Beardsley lingers over the details of clothes that are designed for an extravagant country picnic. He gives that young woman's dress a low neckline and tight bodice that say, "Undress me with your eyes." He draws the boy's knotted neck scarf so precisely that you can imagine untying it, and you wouldn't be surprised, once a few more layers were peeled off, if that boy turned out to be a girl. What is certain is that these two are so young and pretty and intent, and that their lips are so luscious, and that those woods are so dark.

In certain respects, Beardsley would seem to be a perfect figure for our been-there-done-that moment. What other artist is so playfully self-indulgent yet simultaneously so analytical, so used to being disabused? He is perfectly clear about his fantasies; even his darkest nightmares are rendered with a twinkle. Still, there are a number of problems for anybody who nowadays approaches Beardsley, not the least of which is that we *have* been here before. When the middle-aged audience that goes to museums and buys art books takes a look at Beardsley, they may be seeing only flashbacks to the greenhorn decadence of their youth. If the first thought of a lot of people, on considering this centenary, was, "Oh no, not Beardsley," they may have been reacting not to Beardsley's work but to the posters and paraphernalia bearing or adapting his designs that formed the background for their first adventures with sex, drugs, and rock and roll.

BEARDSLEY IS ONE of those rare artists who, while investigating every nook and cranny of a personal vision, provoke a popular reaction. But it is important to remember that the Beardsley boom of the 1960s no more began in the headshops than the boom of the 1890s began in the scandal sheets. The precipitating event in 1966 was a deeply pondered retrospective that Brian Reade organized at the Victoria and Albert; and Stephen Calloway's show last winter was obviously organized in the hope that lightning might strike twice. In the '60s, historians and critics of consequence were taking Beardsley's measure. They included Kenneth Clark, who wrote about his lifelong enthusiasm for Beardsley in the London *Times* just as the V&A show opened; Stanley Weintraub, whose fine biography appeared in 1967; and Brigid Brophy, whose *Black and White*, which came out in 1968, is still one of the smartest things on the subject. The irony of Beardsley's '60s appeal cannot have escaped these writers, for the artist's unexpected emergence as a poster boy for the flower children was a recapitulation of the situation in the 1890s, only with the popular response reversed. What the public had scorned in the '90s, they embraced in the '60s.

In the 1960s, Reade, Clark, Weintraub, and Brophy were all building on the immensely sophisticated interpretations of Beardsley that had been written by friends from the 1890s, among them Arthur Symons, Max Beerbohm, and William Butler Yeats. Even back then, Beardsley's admirers experienced some befuddlement when contemplating the reactions of the mob. When Yeats recalled, in his autobiography, all the public uproar over Beardsley, he understood perfectly well why there had been a flap, but he couldn't help wondering at how blunderingly irrational so much of it had been. When the man who managed the railway bookstalls in England refused to carry *The Savoy*, with devastating economic implications for the magazine of which Beardsley was the art editor and

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Yeats a contributor, the drawing to which he took exception in his search for an offensive Beardsley was in fact a work by William Blake.

Arthur Symons, *The Savoy*'s editor, pointed out to the manager that Blake was "a very spiritual artist." The manager's response was: "You must remember that we have an audience of young ladies as well as an audience of agnostics." That was a non sequitur, but there was more to come. As Symons was leaving the manager's office, he was called back and told that "if contrary to our expectations *The Savoy* should have a large sale, we should be very glad to see you again."

Yeats had written the article about Blake that carried the objectionable illustration. He was so enraged by the whole incident that he wrote a letter to "a principal daily newspaper," but they refused to print the letter because they "made it a rule ... never to mention Beardsley's name." Yeats asked the editor of that paper, "Would you have made the same rule in the case of Hogarth?"—against whom, he pointed out, "much the same objection could be taken." To which the reply—given, as Yeats recalled, with "a dreamy look"—was, "Ah, there was no popular press in Hogarth's day." Seventy years later, the press reaction was another kind of farce, only in praise rather than blame. As Kenneth Clark suggested in his memoir *Another Part of the Wood*, the reactions were equally as dreamy and still fundamentally inexplicable. In the wake of the "hysterically successful" exhibition at the V&A, "Beardsley décors began to appear in every Chelsea boutique, Beardsley dresses were advertised in *Vogue*; then the fashion ended, as suddenly and as mysteriously as it had begun."

As for the centenary that has now passed, its mystery is that Beardsley has hardly registered on the radar screens of the fashion conscious. When I was in London last winter to see the retrospective at the Victoria and Albert, my impression was that artistic London could not have cared less. Beardsley was fuddy-duddy stuff when all eyes were focused on Tracey Emin, the artist who had already chronicled her sex life by inscribing the names of everybody with whom she had ever slept on the inside of a tent that museum-goers were welcome to enter, just so long as they were willing to get down on all fours. Of course, there was nothing about sex that Aubrey Beardsley regarded as out of bounds; but he meant his work to be studied in the pages of an elegantly produced book or magazine. Come to think of it, he probably thought that the best setting in which to pursue that course of study was while reclining in a huge canopied bed, preferably alone, with lots of pillows supporting your back and the covers pulled all the way up to your nose.

Aubrey Beardsley, "Cinesias Entreating Myrrhina to Coition," from "Lysistrata," 1896

IF ANYTHING IS certain about the status of this supreme escapist in 1999, it is that he is not on the "In" list. And that is a surprise. Beardsley became a sensation in his lifetime—and again seventy years later—because he was so good at tweaking reality with the scandalous nature of his fantasies. Now, you might say the public has had its third go at Beardsley, and has at last refused to be tweaked. Which leaves us with the most interesting question of all. What happens to Beardsley when the Beardsley booms are finally over?

Perhaps the first thing to be said about Beardsley's reputation is that people's basic image of the man and his art has not changed since 1966, or for that matter since 1898. While there is no aspect of his staggeringly large output that has not been thoroughly published and studied, we still think of him as the languid young man in Frederick Evans's photographic portrait in 1894, the young man who produced those elongated, elegantly demonic images of Salome for the published version of Wilde's play. Salome, that beautifully baited trap of a femme fatale—all springing tendrils and dangerous tentacles—is the Beardsley character who has stuck. She has come down to us as the ultimate fin-de-siècle man-eater, and the boy-man who dreamed up this infinitely tall woman from hell is always seen as Evans's young aesthete. In that photograph Beardsley's long, sensitive fingers frame a profile that is some sort of art nouveau masterpiece of chilly (but likeably youthful) disdain. The picture was on the dustjacket of Weintraub's biography, and it reappears on the front of Sturgis's new biography as well as on the back of Calloway's book; Beardsley's admirers ought to consider giving this image a rest.

The artist obviously cultivated the singularly stylized persona that Evans immortalized, but the truth is that he was an infinitely more paradoxical and even down-to-earth figure. There is no way that a languid aesthete could have accomplished what this amazingly prolific and influential artist did in a working life of something like six years. Beardsley embraced the hardscrabble existence of a freelance illustrator. Ellen and Mabel, his mother and sister, counted on his financial support. His father Vincent had lost his money almost as soon as Ellen married him, and was never a dependable wage-earner, and mostly seemed not to be around. Beardsley was a workaholic—probably by inclination as well as neces-

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sity—yet all the while he was contending with a fatal disease, and the doctors who treated his tuberculosis almost invariably suggested complete rest as his only chance to live a few more years.

BEARDSLEY MAY HAVE been glad to be seen as perpetually outfitted in a fancy dressing gown and a pair of curly-toed slippers, seated in a darkened room lit by tapers, musing on the image of some out-of-this-world vamp; but the truth was completely different. He loved Grub Street negotiations. He was involved with the founding of two magazines, *The Yellow Book* and *The Savoy*. He was addicted to the hurly-burly of the literary and artistic life in several great cities. Here he is in Paris, the year before his death, writing to Leonard Smithers, the publisher of *The Savoy*: "I managed the journey simply splendidly, and am as fit as a fighting cock today. Have been walking the streets as pertinaciously as a tart." Those are not the words of a hothouse flower. Beardsley struck people as remote, yet he did forge abiding friendships, and many of those friends stood by him through thick and thin. He cared very much for his sister, though most people who knew the pair credit Frank Harris's suggestion of something incestuous as the product of Harris's overheated imagination. What Aubrey and Mabel had shared, early on, were their enthusiastic reactions to art and literature—and to his great success. After Beardsley's death, his friends were still hers.

As for the Wilde connection, it was not simple. "Relations between the two," Sturgis observes, "though cordial on the surface, took on an undertow of competition and even spite." When Beardsley was illustrating *Salome*, Wilde feared that the sensational drawings would swamp his text. As for Beardsley, he sometimes seems to have worried that his association with Wilde made him appear other than heterosexual, which those who knew him best believed that he was. And the fact that Wilde, at the time of his arrest, had been erroneously reported to be holding a copy of *The Yellow Book*, to which Beardsley was inextricably linked as art editor and major contributor, led to Beardsley's being fired from the magazine, a disastrous loss of income from which in some respects he never recovered.

Beardsley's art may come out of the same universe as Wilde's, but the younger man was too much the dreamer to tell us anything about the goings-on in London drawing rooms. As a teenager, he was obsessed with the medievalism of the Pre-Raphaelites, and his whole art is about projecting his feelings into some other time and place—which he reinvents as his time, his place. When he received his first major commission in 1892, to do over three hundred illustrations for *Le Morte Darthur* (as the publisher spelled it), his own interests were already shifting toward Japan. It is particularly in some of the smaller images done for *Le Morte Darthur* that he seems to be finding himself, as he gives his black-and-white designs a mosaicked intricacy that catches precisely the richness of a fairy tale.

Beardsley is already a master of historical styles. From then on the key to his achievement is his capacity to become so intimate with a whole panoply of historical styles that he can regard the particulars of a Japanese print or a rococo book illustration as an expression of his own passionately fantastical nature. Beardsley's feeling for the history of art is fetishistic; but this is a dynamic, creative kind of fetishism. He is enraptured by the relative weights and densities of lines. He loves Japanese lines, medieval lines, rococo lines. And sometimes he lets his lines turn into disappearing-act effects, by substituting dots and dashes. He lusts after a whole catalogue of curves and curls.

THIS ACHIEVEMENT IS an orgy of historicism, but Beardsley gives every style he loves its due. He is sensitive to the impossibly filigreed eighteenth-century French engraving styles of Eisen, Moreau-le-Jeune, and Cochin, but he is equally attuned to the bold architectural woodcut fantasies in the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, that masterpiece of Venetian Renaissance book design that inspired Titian, among others. He is a close student of Mantegna's engravings, reproductions of which were pinned to the walls of the room in which he died in Menton. What Beardsley's work adds up to is an immaculate bacchanal of styles, each presented with a scintillating attentiveness to detail.

Beardsley was one of those rare artists—Callot also comes to mind—who made a critical contribution to Western art working almost exclusively in black and white. But even in this exalted company Beardsley has a further, unique distinction. He is the only artist who has ever managed to express a vision of delicate originality through images that were right from the start designed to be presented to the public as photomechanical reproductions. We forget what a modern Beardsley is, in this rejection of the old artisanal methods of reproduction. Early in his career he had written enthusiastically about posters, which were then the hot news from Paris, those images that were printed in a factory and slapped on a public wall. Beardsley makes a decisive break with such masters of his day as Whistler, who etched copperplates by hand, in much the way artists had done hundreds of years earlier; and Whistler, who was initially annoyed by Beardsley, succumbed when he saw the drawings the young man had done for *The Rape of the Lock*.

PERHAPS BEARDSLEY understood his strong nostalgia for a dozen antiquated styles as a way of enriching a black-and-white technique that was tailored to the reproductive methods of late nineteenth-century publishing. (True, some of his best work was done for deluxe editions, but even there questions of cost-effectiveness were rarely far from the publisher's mind.) Beardsley's illustrations for Wilde's *Salome* join Pre-Raphaelitism and *japonisme* to achieve a new kind of Gothicizing deracination. He has a Neoclassical phase—most famously in a drawing of flagellation, the 1895 frontispiece for *The Wonderful Mission of Earl Lavender*—when he lingers over the cool, emptied-out geometries of Flaxman, allowing his lines to become so thin that they are almost vanishing, suggesting physicality with a seductive discretion. The eighteenth century fascinates him, both its earlier, informal phase, epitomized by the divine Watteau, and its later, overburdened phase, which he uses as an equivalent to the tight-packed rhymes of Pope. Toward the end of his life his attention shifted again, and he drew inspiration from the weightiest arabesques that one might see in School of Fontainebleau designs, or in some prints by Dürer.

Arthur Symons, in his obituary essay on his friend, observed that Beardsley worked in five or six styles in as many years. That avidity for variety suggests the hunger and the curiosity of a hyperintelligent child. And this jibes with a comment that Brigid Brophy makes about the central theme of Beardsley's art: "His vision is permanently that of a child lying in bed watching his mother dress for a dinner-party. His fantasy hangs this here, tries the effect of that there: everything is a jewel, and everything is a sexual organ." I would only add that Beardsley is watching his father dress for dinner, too.

He wonders at everything that sexuality can be—at how sex can reduce people to foolish innocence and uncontrollable rage. He toys with the thematic possibilities, much as he plays with different styles. He dresses up emotions and he abstracts them, and the elegance of his line is a perfect expression of the formality of his erotic imagination. By creating images that are at once so dispassionate and so incendiary, he infuses his supremely artificial world with some of the complexity of

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lived experience, where things are rarely all one way.

That Beardsley keeps eluding our attempts to define him is a great testament to his powers as an artist. Writing of the album *Fifty Drawings*, published in 1897, Max Beerbohm announced that "he was always a preposterous mystery." In his autobiography, Yeats suggested that Beardsley was a man who was honest enough to know that he could not always be sure of his own feelings. Of Beardsley's eventual conversion to Christianity, Yeats says that he thinks it was "sincere"; but the poet cannot help wondering if this conversion was not fueled by Beardsley's "recognition that historical Christianity had dwindled to a box of toys, and that it might be amusing to empty the whole box on to the counterpane." Yeats believed that their whole group of 1890s friends had a feeling that since science had "won its right to explore whatever passes before its corporeal eye, and merely because it passes," perhaps literature and art could now demand "the same right of exploration of all that passes before the mind's eye, and merely because it passes."

That the artists of the '90s felt a sympathy with the disinterested attitude of the scientist is perfectly consistent with their fascination with sexual research and pornographic literature. Havelock Ellis frequented the same London literary circles as Aubrey Beardsley. It is important to remember that the scientific method has its emotional dimension: there is ardor in that cool, keep-your-distance way of regarding things. Beardsley, who was a great student of eighteenth-century pornographic literature and illustrations, could dissect these images and texts, and find conventions and conceits that he infused with his own kind of emphasis.

Beardsley's fascination with emblems and symbols came out of a long tradition of overlapping between literature and the visual arts, so it is not surprising that he had literary ambitions. In the eighty pages of his *Story of Venus and Tannhäuser* (also known as *Under the Hill*)—some of which was published, in an expurgated form, in *The Savoy*—he created a verbal analogue to his wildest visual caprices. Beardsley's panorama of the court of Venus is an elaborately tapestried vision. Venus's realm may also be his most personal statement of the whatever-suits-you-is-fine-with-me philosophy of the Decadent 1890s. When you have read Beardsley's descriptions of what Venus does after she has satisfied her pet unicorn, and of what a young man named Felix does to take care of her bodily functions, you will understand why the book did not get into general circulation until the Grove Press edition in the '60s.

Aubrey Beardsley, "The Death of Pierrot," 1896

Overall, *Venus and Tannhäuser* has a sugary slow-motion beauty, and the startling or untoward elements register as brilliant, acidic touches. The key to the whole, as Edmund Wilson pointed out as early as 1923, is the sweetness of Venus: she has guilelessly amused reactions to all the touching and the poking that goes on around her. This is a world in which you want to look at and feel everything, beginning with the huge moths that dance at the entrance to Venus's Hill as Tannhäuser lingers there in the opening scene—a scene that inspires Beardsley's glorious drawing of a puffed-up Louis XIVth fop. *Venus and Tannhäuser* is about the contemplation of beauty and pleasure. It's characteristic that we are denied the lovers' first great love scene. We have the preliminaries, and then Tannhäuser the morning after. Everything is expectations and memories. But Beardsley is no fool; his need to stylize experience comes out of a sure knowledge that some of what we feel is beyond our control.

Venus and Tannhäuser, left unfinished at the time of his death, is Beardsley's one extended experiment in storytelling. He presents their story less as a narrative than as a series of tableaux: Tannhäuser at the entrance to the Hill; Venus at her toilet; the banquet. The organization is masterful, especially considering how cunningly Beardsley overlaps several tableaux. While Venus was getting dressed, for example, her attendants informed her that "just then Tannhäuser was at the baths, and was creating a favourable impression." We can see how Beardsley's work as an illustrator prepared him for this kind of writing. In the October 1894 number of *The Yellow Book*, which contains some of his most famous drawings, four essentially disconnected images are joined to create a tale that might be called "A Night Out." We begin with "Portrait of Himself," the artist poking his head out from a vast canopied bed. Then we come to "Lady Gold's Escort," with the wizened woman accompanied into the theater by a phalanx of creepily elegant gents, at least one of whom might be the artist. In the third plate, the famous "Wagnerites," we are in the theater, listening to *Tristan and Isolde*. And finally, in "La Dame aux Camélias," we are back home, in a room that is based on Beardsley's own rooms, where a woman contemplates her image in a mirror and, maybe, prepares to go out again.

As an illustrator of other people's texts, Beardsley was relentless in his attentiveness to what the author actually

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described. On first glance, Beardsley's illustration of "The Baron's Prayer" for *The Rape of the Lock* looks like one of his most personal concoctions, with the young baron kneeling before a pile of books from the top of which smoke and flames elegantly twirl. Go to Pope's poem, however, and you realize that Beardsley has drawn exactly the Altar to Love that the poet describes. Beardsley has neither more nor less than the "twelve vast French Romances, neatly gilt," as well as the garters, the gloves, "all the trophies of his former loves."

Beardsley's sense of narrative detail is evident in small projects, too. A bookplate that he originally designed for himself is a weird epic in miniature. What might be a eunuch bears on his head a platter full of books, which he offers to his voluptuous mistress, who is stark naked expect for a long bouncy feather perched in the top of her elaborate coiffure. Assigned to do some decorations for Balzac's *Comédie humaine*, Beardsley invented for the binding a black-as-night satanic grinning mask, which seems to absorb all the great French novelist's labyrinthine narratives into its empty-socket eyes.

WORKING FOR A wide variety of publishers over a period of some six years, Beardsley managed to create a body of work with a powerful internal logic. This personal mythic universe has a thematic consistency that transcends all the shifts of story and style, and gives Beardsley's achievement some of the phantasmagorical force that Freud associated with what he called "the family romance." Freud's concept of the family romance is in fact an invention of the Beardsley period; he first sketched out these ideas in some letters to Fliess in 1897 and 1898.

In the essay that he published a decade later, Freud argued that as adolescents become disillusioned with their parents—feeling that their fathers and mothers are neither as grand nor as interested in their offspring as they had once imagined—the children may reach for new, imagined parents. These parents are often "of a higher social standing"; Freud mentions "the Lord of the Manor" or "some member of the aristocracy." Freud believes that the family romance has "two principal aims, an erotic and an ambitious one," as the child finds new, improved love objects. And this mix seems to fit Beardsley's case perfectly. Here was a young man who grew up in straitened circumstances and went on to invent an imaginary erotic aristocracy. He didn't just remake his parents. He remade himself and his sister, and all the while he was turning the whole fantasy into an extraordinary work of art.

THAT BEARDSLEY'S family romance should be a romance of mothers and sons and daughters, with not many fathers in sight, is no surprise. His own father was mainly absent. This might have led Beardsley to emphasize fathers or to rid himself of them entirely. What we do get is a whole gallery of powerful women—beginning, of course, with *Salome*, but including other nightmares of insatiable passion, such as Messalina, from Juvenal's Sixth Satire. Messalina stomps up the stairs from her bath, her breasts bared, her face and hand scrunched up in frustration and rage. Other images have a low-down comedy, like the ladies in *Lysistrata*, who seem as delighted as they are confused by their full-blown womanliness. And then there is the immensely fat Mrs. Marsuple, Venus's manicurist, who sits by her mistress's chair, her feet spread wide, an image of self-satisfied vulgarity, like the madame in a whorehouse by Degas.

Witches are frequently the most indelible images in fairy tales, but the more you look at Beardsley's family romance, the more you realize how deep and complicated an interpretation he offers of the young girls and boys who venture into the dark woods—or seek escape from them. Beardsley's girls, as Linda Gertner Zatlin pointed out in 1990 in a very impressive chapter on "The Beardsley Woman" in *Aubrey Beardsley and Victorian Sexual Politics*, are among his most original achievements. In that book and in her recent *Beardsley, Japonisme, and the Perversion of the Victorian Ideal* (Cambridge University Press), Zeitlin has a bad habit of imposing 1990s jargon on 1890s experiences; but her feeling for the work is authentic and her knowledge is encyclopedic. She makes much of the fact that so many of these young women are shown reading books. She believes that we would be wrong to interpret all this reading as a sign of girlish innocence; and I am convinced by her argument that for Beardsley the very idea of a woman's picking up a book suggested nineteenth-century battles over the education of women—as well as the independence that it might imply.

Surely the woman dressed all in black who reaches her gloved hand into the bin full of books in a design for a *Yellow Book* prospectus is a tough customer. "The Beardsley woman who patronizes a bookshop," Zeitlin writes, "was not the one whose husband or father censured her purchases." Zeitlin describes the bold spirits who Beardsley often enjoyed gift-wrapping in gently old-fashioned velvet and lace. That was his little joke. When these women take a book with them into the woods, or sit down to read poetry with a satyr, Beardsley comes close to the spirit of Watteau, whose women are neither wives nor mothers and surely choose their own lovers. Many of these delicately rendered figures may be reflections of the artist's sister, who pursued a career on the stage, though with only moderate success. Beardsley's often solitary young women suggest a new kind of femininity—amused yet steely, ironically innocent.

As for the boys who sometimes look longingly at those girls, the artist leaves little doubt that each one is, as he titled one drawing, a "Portrait of Himself." We first see him in 1892, as the young aesthete seated on a tall stool, leafing through a book. The title is "Le Dèbris d'un Poète." Two years later, he is the young man hidden in the huge bed in "Portrait of Himself." But more and more, he is a figure out of the commedia dell'arte. He is dramatizing his role as the eternal child.

IN 1895, COMMISSIONED to do the covers for a series of books to be called Pierrot's Library, Beardsley throws in his lot with Gilles, that mysterious all-white figure immortalized by Watteau, with whose early death Beardsley could not but identify. Beardsley's Pierrot is in bibliophile's heaven, halfway up the library stairs, a small smile playing across his face, a book in one hand, his other arm reaching for a second volume. He is a slightly diffident figure, but he is insatiable with the things that he loves—especially the words and the images that he finds in (or creates for) books. Not too much later, however, in the drawing called "The Death of Pierrot," published in *The Savoy* in October 1896, Pierrot has taken off his robe and taken to his bed. Sunk in sleep, he is visited by four revelers. One wears a mask, another a mantilla; several of them are holding a finger to their lips. Don't disturb the artist, they seem to be saying: not because he is at work, but because he is near death.

Beardsley's rendering of his own end struck a chord in the early twentieth century, perhaps because he was so circumspectly comical about it. Picasso painted a *Death of Harlequin* in 1906, which John Richardson relates to Beardsley; I would even argue that the whole cast of characters in Picasso's Blue and Rose periods has a distinctly Beardsleyesque feel. Not too many years after Picasso painted this *Harlequin*, when Beardsley's sister Mabel lay dying, Yeats composed a series of poems about her, which double as a final salute to his friend from the '90s. Mabel is now a female version of her brother in

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bed, "propped upon pillows, rouge on the pallor of her face." In accounts of Mabel's death, we read that visitors brought her dolls patterned after Beardsley characters; she is playing with the family romance as she dies. And all the while she knows, as Yeats writes,

> that some one soon
> Will come from the house, and say—
> Though play is but half done—
> "Come in and leave the play."

ALTHOUGH BEARDSLEY died agonizingly young, his art feels complete. This sense of completeness—which he achieved by refracting his own experiences through a kaleidoscopic appreciation of the art that he discovered in the museums, the libraries, and the rare bookshops—eludes many of the authors who write about Beardsley today. Stephen Calloway's *Aubrey Beardsley* (Abrams) is the work of a staggeringly well-informed enthusiast—a wonderful volume, packed with information, full of marvelously interesting reproductions of title pages, decorative bindings, and odd, miscellaneous projects. Calloway shows us how Beardsley managed to fit his wildest imaginings into the insistently rectilinear structure of a book. Still, he gives us no sense that Beardsley was a major creator who forged out of the slightest project a new page in his vast family romance. And a sense of Beardsley's largeness is missing also from Matthew Sturgis's *Aubrey Beardsley: A Biography* (Overlook). He presents a detailed and convincing account of the 1890s, but Beardsley's work gets a little lost in the narrative's insistent forward flow.

In the new books about Beardsley we hear, again and again, the old story of his scandalous career. I think that the public is perfectly justified in being bored by this. If the muffled response to the centenary has suggested anything, it is that we are beginning to find a new way of responding to Beardsley. His wonderfully elaborate family romance horrified much of London in the 1890s, and it was embraced by what seemed like the whole world in the 1960s; but it doesn't connect with the erotic undercurrents of the 1990s, which are rarely framed in terms of his powerful face-offs between young and old or man and woman. People in their teens and twenties are not provoked by Beardsley; his elegantly upscale demons may seem as dead and gone as Victorian morality. His work is now a psychological artifact that is going to vanish into irrelevance—or an imaginative force that has a future in the museums and the libraries.

It is significant, I think, that the most important centenary event in the United States, a beautiful show in the Princeton University Library, received barely a mention in the press. Princeton's holdings, the bulk of which were assembled early in this century by the art collector A.E. Gallatin, made for a powerhouse of an exhibition, but since this show was designed to satisfy only the small circle of people who care for rare books, there was no reason to expect that it would be brought to the attention of a wider audience. Which is perfectly fine. Certain artists may make the move from sensation to immortal only under the cover of a general mood of indifference. And that is what is happening to Aubrey Beardsley. One hundred and one years after his death, the shouting is finally over, but his art is still very young; and the pierrots of the future are going to walk into the museums and the libraries and discover his glory, in much the way that he once discovered the glory of Utamaro and Mantegna and Watteau. ■

The Conundrumizer

By JAMES WOOD

Coleridge: Darker Reflections, 1804–1834 by Richard Holmes

(Pantheon, 622 pp., $32)

I.

THE ENGLISH ARE ecclesiastical but rarely metaphysical; they think in churchyards. Elegy and practicality are the English modes, complementary rather than antagonistic, for elegy can be seen as practical mourning, a way of ordering the laurels. Metaphysics is a mere burr of thought, an adhesion to be plucked off the sturdy English garment and flicked back into the dark thicket whence it came. Schopenhauer noted that "whenever anyone in England wishes to describe something as very obscure or indeed as totally unintelligible, he says it is like German metaphysics." Perhaps he was thinking of Thomas Gray, the lachrymator of churchyards, who once complained: "must I plunge into metaphysics? Alas, I cannot see in the dark; nature has not furnished me with the optics of a cat."

Samuel Taylor Coleridge is the great English turncoat. He was burred in thought. Amid stolid English simplism, he was a travelling temerity—mobile, metaphysical, Germanic yet Englishly Protestant, the victor of systems. He loved, as he put it in a letter, to "conundrumize." His prose work—his lectures on Shakespeare of 1811 and 1818, the *Biographia Literaria* (1817), his copious notebooks and marginalia, and his late theological work, collected in *Aids to Reflection* (1825) and the posthumous *Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit*—is a junction-box of inheritances, stuck full of magical combinations: Lessing and Kant and Schlegel, Bacon and Hartley and Locke. His prose is many-roomed, extraordinarily hospitable to all that he had learned, in his great reading, from the English poets, above all Shakespeare and Milton: that is to say, although he can subdue words whenever he wants, he also lets them muster their palpabilities on the page, so that they storm abundantly, *as words*, trailing their etymologies like invisible hems, and almost ripening into abstractions in the process. It is a dragging and dense style, sometimes obscure, with voluminous sentences that stretch like library corridors. He called this, in a typically lovely phrase, a prose that had "the hooks-and-eyes of memory." At the same time, Coleridge is always bounding into simile and metaphor, and his use of the metaphorical often glints epigrammatically—as for instance when he wrote that "Swift was the soul of Rabelais dwelling in a dry place."

Fittingly, his own scattered influence is hard to collect. He probably gave Keats his idea of "negative capability," for Keats, before writing his famous letter, had read the *Biographia*, with its similar advocacy of what Coleridge called the "negative faith" that free drama requests of us. His criticism of Shakespeare continues to be influential, while Hazlitt's does not, because while Hazlitt's is really a film of impressions, albeit a beautiful one, Coleridge's is both intensely practical ("practical criticism" is Coleridge's phrase) and intensely theoretical. His radical yet commonsensical Protestant approach to Bibli-

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cal criticism, which proposed reading the Bible as if it were any other great text, influenced Matthew Arnold and subsequent Anglican theology. And he clearly had an effect on Melville, his true colleague in language, who read the *Biographia* before writing *Moby-Dick.* Both writers loved Sir Thomas Browne, the seventeenth-century essayist, for his loitering speculations and thronged lexicon. Both writers had read Pierre Bayle, the French skeptical theologian, though Melville was blasphemously exhaustive while Coleridge was exhaustively orthodox. Both indulged in what Melville called "philosophical ripping," boisterous, borderless monologues of speculation and association. And of course both were in love with, were captives of, metaphor, tending to see the world as a transit of likenesses.

This "library-cormorant," as Coleridge called himself, has been enduringly fixed in our minds by Richard Holmes's great biography, which has consumed fifteen years of Holmes's life, and is now complete with its second volume. Holmes's greatest triumph, in a project bristling with them, is that of animism: he makes Coleridge live, and writes of him almost memoiristically, as if remembering his actual flame rather than reading his ashes. We are drawn to share this warmth, so that the experience is like encountering a vivid fictional character—a Sternean or Melvillean one—who once had the historical audacity to be real as well. Holmes regularly squanders on his footnotes what inferior biographers would hoard in the main body of the text. In the first volume, for instance, he describes a contradiction of Coleridge's personality: the poet was both flamboyantly social and secretively lonely, a division that constituted manic-depression in his middle years, when severe opium addiction exaggerated his swings. Holmes examines this for a while, and then draws us to the following footnote:

> In later life, there is at times almost an impression of *physical* discontinuity between these two sides to his personality. The public Coleridge seemed to strike onlookers as large ("big as a house" said Southey), slow, genial, expansive, a sort of amiable performing bear. He took clouds of snuff, dominated every drawing-room he shuffled into, and talked ceaselessly. But the private man always seemed to retain a small, agile, childlike and secretive presence. He moved anxiously between rooms, houses, towns; he pounded over hill-tops, leaped into coaches, and (even in his fifties) hurled himself into the sea for fun; he dosed himself surreptitiously behind doors and bedcurtains with brandy and laudanum, and nipped out to chemist shops and pot-houses; he scribbled endlessly in his Notebooks far into the night. One of the acutest observers of these physical changes and disparities was that genius of natural description, Dorothy Wordsworth. Sometimes even she said he was simply "unrecognisable."

COURTESY PANTHEON BOOKS

C.R. Leslie, Coleridge in 1824

Along with this novelistic genius, Holmes has also the more determined qualities of the great biographer. His scholarship is deep, his interpretations of Coleridge's main texts are not snapped summaries but a large, total interpretation, narratively broken. Most importantly, Holmes has a fine ear for, and an infectious love of, Coleridge's roaring language. Holmes uses the letters and the notebooks superbly, always selecting the little spangle, the little luster of verbal exuberance, and nudging it into the narrative. If Coleridge has a swollen knee, Holmes will add Coleridge's description in parenthesis ("pregnant with agony"). In Holmes's telling, Coleridge's metaphors and similes accompany him as a kind of code, a shadow from which we can read the hour of his life. Here he is in Bristol, a young revolutionary, being hissed at during a political lecture. "I am not at all surprised," shouts Coleridge over the crowd, "when the red hot prejudices of aristocrats are suddenly plunged into the cool waters of reason, that they should go off with a hiss!" And here is Coleridge, oppressed and clogged, giving way to characteristic self-pity: "I am in stirrups all day, yea, and sleep in my spurs."

As in Melville's case, his metaphorical power has a life of its own, and acts in a contradictory manner, turning lament or complaint into its opposite, sheerly by existing as literary exuberance, and literary art. He suffered terribly on his long voyage to Malta in 1804, but was able to summon the wit to complain that his bed did everything but enable him to sleep in it: the bed was "like a great Genius apprenticed to a wrong trade." Poetry had died in him, wrote Coleridge in 1801: "I was once a Volume of Gold Leaf, rising and riding on every breath of Fancy—but I have beaten myself back into weight and density, and now I sink in quicksilver, yea, remain squat and square on the earth." Five years later, he again complained that he had got lost in "the unwholesome quick-silver mines of abstruse Metaphysics." The reader wonders if these mines were either so unpleasant, or so antipathetic to the spirit of poetry, if they spurred Coleridge on to turn them into such happy metaphor.

What is Holmes's Coleridge like? He is both wild and saturnine, inspired and arrested. From young radical to old conservative—a journey, of course, in which he was accompanied by Wordsworth and Southey—Coleridge was always an over-

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whelming talker and extemporizer. His lectures, such as we have them, are not written texts but aural showers, gathered by certain loyal listeners. The *Biographia* was dictated to a friend over the summer of 1815. We see him pounding roads (Hazlitt noticed that he walked from one side to the other), messy with metaphysics, wayward, vulnerable, impossible. A friend said that if he were richer, he would pay Coleridge five hundred pounds a year to dine with him twice weekly. What battered allure he must have had! He was big and shambling, physically careless, with dark eyes and a voluptuous, all-savoring mouth. He was large-hearted but irresponsible, a negligent husband and intermittent father. In his middle years, he moved from one friend's house to another, promising to stay a few weeks, and then abundantly installing himself for months, sleeping on sofas and housing himself in with shales of papers. Projects and proposals gushed from him: he wrote a ninety-page Greek grammar for his son, he dreamed of establishing an observatory, he founded, edited, and wrote most of a weekly paper, *The Friend*, for ten months (in 1809 and 1810); and he spent several years discussing religious symbolism with Hyman Hurwitz, the director of the Hebrew Academy for Jews in Highgate, with whom he collaborated on a public poem to commemorate the death of George III in 1820.

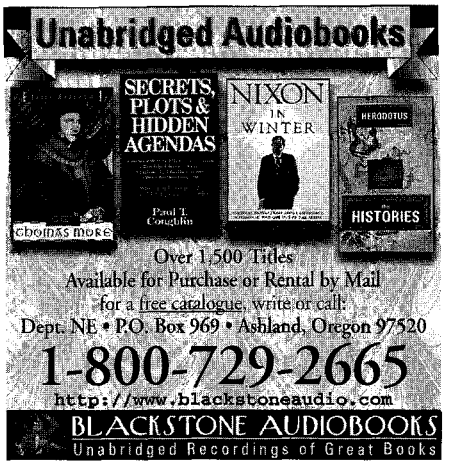
II.

BUT COLERIDGE WAS weak, too, and the story of his last thirty years, those covered by Holmes's majestic second volume, is really the story of his terrible rudderlessness, and his entangled struggle with his own weakness, which he would elaborate into a philosophy and a theology of self-consciousness. This immense, perforated organum of allusion and enigmatic suggestion is powered by, and ceaselessly returns to, the question of the self, and how at once to escape it, to sacrifice it, to redeem it, and finally to know it. Coleridge appears to have wished, with characteristic roominess of soul, that escape, sacrifice, redemption, and knowledge were somehow combinable categories, allied medicines rather than discordant illnesses of the self. In his effort to fuse these categories, Coleridge only made them more distinct, and perhaps rendered not the self but only its mystery more knowable.

By 1804, when this volume opens, Coleridge had returned from Germany, his mind full of Kant and Lessing. He had already decided that "abstruse researches" had killed the poetic instinct in him, and he was veering toward a peculiar combination of piety and self-pity, each feeding off the other. His poems repeatedly take this shape—a trough of plaint rising to an aeration, in which the poet reminds himself and his readers of "truth in Christ" ("Reflections on Having Left a Place of Retirement"), or that God is the "Great universal Teacher!" ("Frost At Midnight"). In his moving poem, "To William Wordsworth," written in 1807, the night after hearing his friend read aloud all thirteen books of *The Prelude*, Coleridge reflects on Wordsworth's greatness, and then considers his own thin powers ("And genius given, and knowledge won in vain"), but, Lear-like, he reproaches himself ("That way no more!") for wandering back onto such an "unhealthful road," and for plucking "the poisons of self-harm."

POISONS, FIGURATIVE AND literal. Coleridge had been suffering terrible pain and intestinal storms for several years. He thought that these were brought on by delicate nerves. In January 1801, his health had entirely collapsed—swollen joints, rheumatic fevers, an enlarged testicle—and he dosed himself heavily with opium. Holmes considers this the start of Coleridge's addiction. The opium seized his insides, and caused constipation. On his voyage to Malta in 1804, Coleridge suffered the humiliation of needing to have strenuous enemas administered by the ship's officers. (On the return trip, twelve enemas were given.) Severe addiction lasted a long time, from 1804 until 1816, when a friend persuaded Dr James Gillman to take a distinguished addict into his home. The addict, warned the friend, needed the supervision of a doctor, to ensure that he would follow a regulated plan of withdrawal. Typically, Gillman expected to have Coleridge for a few months in his house, but he was Gillman's guest for sixteen years, until the poet's death in 1834.

The servitude of this addiction prompted an awful self-reckoning for Coleridge. Opium, and the behavior that it encouraged or accompanied, lost Coleridge the respect and the alliance of the man he most revered, Wordsworth. By 1809, Wordsworth, who had seen Coleridge effectively abandon his wife and children, had seen his frenzied caravan move from temporary house to house, had seen the nectary of Coleridge's lyric gifts dry into tendrils of metaphysics, decided that he must warn his more naïve friends against letting Coleridge into their houses. He wrote to Thomas Poole that Coleridge "neither will nor can execute anything of important benefit either to himself, his family or mankind." Coleridge heard from a prospective host, Basil Montagu, that



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Wordsworth had intervened against him, and went to pieces. His notebooks, as Holmes quotes from them, are heart-searing. Again and again, in the direst anguish, he returned to the thought that Wordsworth had "no Hope of me!"

A CONTRASTING DIPTYCH might be made of the temperamental differences of Wordsworth and Coleridge. The former, relatively unbookish, autonomous, calmly propulsive, a natural genius, self-measuring and self-measured, a little priggish, convinced, as he put it in *The Prelude*, that he was "chosen" to be a great poet. The latter, book-bound, helpless and social, combustible and stalled, an unnatural genius, self-invigilating and self-exceeding, desperately devout, cast out of poetry's choosing by the great centrifuge of philosophical thought, and absolutely in love with Wordsworth, with the man and with his flowing lyric potency. His response to Wordsworth's alienation was the *Biographia*, which lovingly explicated Wordsworth's poetry. Yet in 1817 Henry Crabb Robinson reported that the book had given Wordsworth no pleasure: "The praise is too extravagant and the censure inconsiderate." Nothing is more painful than the story of the two poets' frigid attempt at reconciliation in 1818. At an awkward dinner party given by Charles Lamb, Coleridge and Wordsworth were at separate ends of a long table. Wordsworth, grave and composed, could be heard reciting verse. Coleridge, lounging with friends, could be heard doing the same. Lamb, moving between them, heard Coleridge reciting Wordsworth's poetry, and heard Wordsworth reciting his own.

But the deeper pain of addiction, to judge from Coleridge's writings, issued from the apprehension of the weakness of his will, its soft vincibility. Coleridge found himself utterly defeasible. Again and again he writes of this. In a long letter to John Morgan, written in 1814, he laments that "by the long Habit of the accursed Poison my volition (by which I mean the faculty *instrumental* to the Will, and by which alone the Will can realize itself—its Hands, Legs and Feet, as it were), was completely deranged, at times frenzied, dissevered itself from the Will and became an independent faculty." He continued: "What crime is there scarcely which has not been included in or followed from the one guilt of taking opium? Not to speak of ingratitude to my maker for my wasted Talents; of ingratitude to so many friends who have loved me I know not why; of barbarous neglect of my family." He called opium "this free-agency-annihilating poison," and often stressed that he had not freely gone to it for pleasure, but had been driven to it "by cowardice of pain, first of mental pain" and then "of bodily pain." In 1832, two years before he died, he exulted that although he had been in pain, he had felt no craving "for the poison, which for more than 30 years has been the guilt, debasement, and misery of my existence."

Opium had given Coleridge a particular fear of sleep, of dreaming, and perhaps of the untethered life of memory itself: in a word, of the unconscious. "The Pains of Sleep," an agonizing poem written in 1803, describes nights of "fiendish dream," and "the unfathomable hell within." Coleridge pictures the will caught in a kind of cleft, "burning" to do the right thing, but "still baffled": "To know and loathe, yet wish and do!" A year later, on the Malta voyage, he confided to his notebook that he feared sleep as "a pandemonium of all the shames and miseries of the past life from earliest childhood all huddled together." Memory had become the ticking of a bad conscience for Coleridge, and dream the emblem of a soiled vitality.

NOT SURPRISINGLY, perhaps, it was at this very moment, while the will was in shabbiest abeyance, that Coleridge began to formulate a coherent theory of the will, and its relation to memory and control. It is not too neat to say that his interest in the will bloomed at the instance of its actual collapse, and that its central importance was then developed theoretically in inverse proportion to his own lack of it. Biographically speaking, the system of thought that found its most considered recitation in the *Biographia* was itself an immense act of will, a wish-fulfillment of sorts, a determined effort to assert his intellectual control over his absconding powers. Philosophically speaking, it was a wounded dialectic, which opened a fresh cut every time it sealed an old one.

It was in 1801 that Coleridge, with the help of Kant, first began to throw off his youthful interest in the associationism of David Hartley, who, adapting Locke, had argued for the importance of the impact of physical sense-impressions, and had seen the mind as a passive screen, on which experience threw its defining pigments. Coleridge began to insist that a free will was an essential component of the self, and that Hartley's theories made the self a creature of mechanical effects. In the *Biographia*, he wrote that under Hartley "our life would be divided between the despotism of outward impressions, and that of senseless and passive memory." This would be mere "lawlessness." It might be mere Godlessness, too, for Hartley seemed to turn even faith in God into a business of passive reception.

Kant offered Coleridge a way of making the self both passive and active. On the one hand, the world is phenomenal: we gather and order the phenomena of perception. Coleridge called this the faculty of understanding, and in the *Biographia*, it becomes, roughly, the "primary imagination." On the other hand, said Kant, the world was noumenal: there were transcendent things-in-themselves, unknowable, and this domain is grasped by the practical reason or will. This practical reason asserts itself not by argument but by command and precept; it is how we believe in God. Coleridge bent and expanded Kant's category, stripping it of its fierce philosophical restraint and making it something closer to free will, and at other times closer to the decisive and controlling activity of the imagination. Coleridge called this faculty "reason" (in the *Biographia*, it is, roughly, "the secondary imagination"), by which he did not mean the Enlightenment virtue of universal and necessary rationality, but instead a more Kantian organ, something that "sees invisible realities or spiritual objects." In an issue of his weekly paper, *The Friend*, he wrote that it is reason that enables us to unite the paradoxical hope and warning of the New Testament that "the blessed will see God" (Revelation), and yet that no one has seen God at any time (John). Reason became for Coleridge, as it was for Kant, an unprovable proof that God exists.

THIS GREAT EFFORT of comprehension had its roots in Coleridge's sickness, in his sick passivity. In a striking note on John Bunyan, he writes that the existence of regret and remorse proves the existence of free will, and this is conscience, "and on this rests the whole superstructure of human religion." In other words, his own remorse was an invisible ladder to God. But could Coleridge climb it? The *Biographia* is an extraordinary work, not least as the record of an exploding consciousness. Yet it is affective in part because of the heaving spectacle it offers of a self willing itself to have a will. As Coleridge drags the self into visibility, he struggles to protect it from all that menaces it in this newly transparent world: passivity, waywardness, accident, and memory. And since these qualities are partly constitutive of the self, and especially of Coleridge's self, Coleridge can be found arrested in the poignant situation of protecting the self from itself, even as he insists on scrutinizing the self and insisting that the greatest principle of philosophy is "Know Thyself."

Certainly, the *Biographia* is as self-escaping as it is self-observing. There is a remarkable passage at the end of Chap-

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ter Six, when Coleridge, having dismissed the "lawlessness" of Hartley's associationism, concludes warily that memory is endless, and that "all thoughts are in themselves imperishable," and that God might well "bring before every human soul the collective experience of its whole past existence." With mounting horror, Coleridge continues: "And this, this, perchance, is the dread book of judgement, in whose mysterious hieroglyphics every idle word is recorded." Perhaps, says Coleridge, none of our past acts can be loosened from the chain of memory, a chain "to whose links, conscious or unconscious, the free-will, our only absolute *self*, is co-extensive and co-present." Then, in a gesture similar to the Lear-like moment in his poem "To William Wordsworth," Coleridge announces that he will turn away from such matters: "But not now dare I longer discourse of this, waiting for a loftier mood, and nobler subject, warned from within and from without, that it is a profanation to speak of these mysteries."

So against the palpable fear of a limitless and arraigning memory, is posed the free will, which has now been elevated into "our only absolute *self*." Six years later, De Quincey, in *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*, would agree with Coleridge that memory is the dread book, and would utter the strikingly Freudian thought that "there is no such thing as *forgetting*." Yet De Quincey celebrates opium as Coleridge never does, swimming in the azure of its visions, dreams, and associations, waters that for Coleridge were green and drowning. Fearful, Coleridge must resist De Quincey's kind of happy drift, which means, in some respects, resisting the drift of consciousness, resisting his own fertile consciousness, his own pealing powers. A will exists, insist Coleridge, "whose function it is to control, determine, and modify the phantasmal chaos of association." It is surely clear that Coleridge is not merely talking about Hartley here, but about the chaos of free consciousness itself. Even as Coleridge enacts a form of stream-of-consciousness, and enacts a considerable feat of memory (recall that he dictated the book, so that it is a kind of Sternean performance), he warns against that enactment. For what is stream-of-consciousness, really, but a stream of association? Sterne had made this clear enough in *Tristram Shandy*, a novel deeply admired by Coleridge.

Thus it is that Coleridge alights on his lovely image of the self winning its way against a counterflow, as a water-insect "*wins* its way up against the stream, by alternate pulses of active and passive motion, now resisting the current, and now yielding to it in order to gather strength and a momentary *fulcrum* for a further propulsion. This is no unapt emblem of the mind's self-experience in the act of thinking." But what this emblem evades is that, in the case of the self, and especially in the case of Coleridge's self, the countercurrent against which we struggle is not provided by nature, does not come from outside: it is produced by the self. The self makes its own obstacles, which it must then surmount. Yet this surmounting is likely to throw up fresh obstacles. Biographically, it can be put this way: the self medicalizes itself, or, in the classical term, mithridatizes itself. (Healing itself by poisoning itself, poisoning itself by healing itself: this is exactly the dynamic of Coleridge's opium-taking.) Philosophically, it can be put like this: the self is only and always the poor dialectic of itself, in search of the cessation of sleep.

III.

The great pathos, tension, and comedy of Coleridge's work is that he commits the sins against which he warns—and commits them while in the act of warning against them. It is why he is so likeable a Christian, despite his orthodoxy. His piety shares its borders with a rogue state. His devoutness is a brave face, not self-exhortation so much as self-accusation. It is a row, a struggle. A local, secular example is found in his joyous use of digressive metaphor, coupled with his simultaneous awareness that digression must be genteely bridled. Coleridge, of course, who happily called himself a "philoparenthesist," or lover of parentheses, does not bridle himself, but merely produces digressions about how he should not digress. In one of the letters from Germany that appears in the *Biographia*, he discourses wildly on German and Latin etymology, and then reproaches himself: "Now I know, my gentle friend, what you are murmuring to yourself—'This is so like him! running away after the first bubble, that chance has blown off from the surface of his fancy; when one is anxious to learn where he is and what he has seen.'" Like Melville, Coleridge uses metaphor to describe and to censure his own volubility; but metaphor, being itself a species of volubility, an extender of discourse with a free life of its own, becomes merely an exhibit in the case against itself.

Yet this local example might bear a larger municipal application. In both Coleridge and Melville, some kind of principle of neutralizing abundance was at work. Both were moral writers who were somewhat undone by the amorality, the

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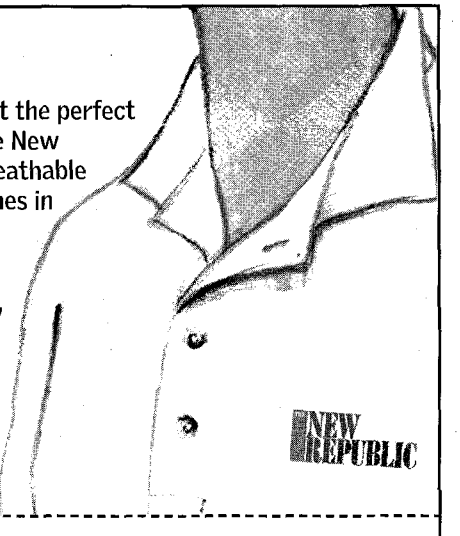

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waywardness, of their creativity. Melville discovered—the verb seems right—that metaphor, if rigorously pursued, leads to a blasphemy of resemblances: this is the form of *Moby-Dick*, a novel which explores, and finally decides against, the medieval notion that we can know God by his attributes. Melville, having compared the whale to everything under the sun, decides that we cannot know the whale (God) by his attributes, and this was doubtless why Camus called it the most perfect example of an "absurd" novel. Coleridge lacked Melville's atheistic tremors, yet in a somewhat similar way he was always being thwarted by his own flinging fertility. His desire for unity—for union with God, for a coherence of system—was much greater than was Melville's, yet his own speculative powers and drives always caused that unity to undergo a splitting, a malicious mitosis.

This is surely what happened at the moment when Coleridge earnestly desired to make his phenomenology of the self into a theology of the self. It is one thing to divide the self into passive and active faculties, to insist on a controlling will, and so on. This willed and "healthy" division, so clearly a response to Coleridge's hapless and sick division, this tense "war-embrace" can perhaps hold as a description, a first map, a metaphor of the self's necessary wars, of how it wins its way up against the stream. The difficulty arises when this self is asked to act, to perform, to be; for then this picture of the self is no longer a picture but an activity. And this is what Coleridge asked of the self twice over: first, by insisting that it know itself, and secondly, by insisting that it redeem itself. And, in a further complication, he appeared to believe that in knowing himself he redeemed himself.

These were not abstract molds for Coleridge. He fervently believed that "Know Thyself" was both the great demand of philosophy and the great demand of God. He liked to quote Juvenal: "From heaven descended the 'Know Thyself.'" In *The Friend*, he argued that God, the soul, eternal truth were not only the objects of reason but were themselves reason. "We name God the Supreme Reason ... whatever is conscious self-knowledge is reason." But if God is reason, and conscious self-knowledge is also reason, then this is very close to arguing that conscious self-knowledge is God, an obvious blasphemy. And if the self, in the act of thinking about itself, is producing such obvious blasphemies, then the self is rotten, is not God at all, but perhaps its opposite. Coleridge does not spell this out, but the diabolism, the amoral freedoms of the self, are a felt menace in Coleridge's work. The problem is not simply that it is hard to know oneself, but that conscious self-knowledge, as Coleridge calls it, may make the self harder to save, and may further obscure the cleanliness of the self. Conscious self-knowledge makes conscious self-knowledge harder, and is certainly no redemption. Coleridge knew this: "Do you know your knowledge?" was one of his teasing questions.

And conscious self-knowledge makes very difficult that longing for stability and order, the self militant, that Coleridge seems religiously to desire—"the only absolute *self*," the "very and permanent self." At the end of his *Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit*, he writes that Christianity lets "the unsubstantial, insulated self pass away as in a stream," an orthodox enough formulation. But once this is done, where is "the only absolute self" to be found? Coleridge could hardly be optimistic, despite all the theoretical exhortation, about the absoluteness of his own self. His life had been a convoy of shames, his free will sloughy and inutile. So he must offer himself up for redemption, to be saved. Coleridge had a deep sense of his sinfulness, a nature "deepliest stained with sin," as he puts it one poem, and a firm belief in original sin. Thus he writes, again in perfect orthodoxy, "To conquer ourselves is the only true knowledge." Yet this is a long way from the more pagan "Know Thyself," which Coleridge dreamed of as the path to redemption. This, in Christian sacrifice, is more like self-obliteration. So Coleridge proceeded, attempting at once to escape, to conquer, to save, and to know himself.

Coleridge's struggle with the self is a moving declaration of failure. The entire entanglement might be summarized in this double paradox, one secular and one religious: in secular terms, or cognitively, the self cannot know itself, because the medium of its transparency is itself, which is not transparent; and in religious terms, the self cannot redeem itself, for the analogous reason that the medium of its redemption is itself corrupt. Yet the self never stops wanting to negotiate these paradoxes, precisely because these paradoxes, which are paradoxes of self-limitation, are all it has: they *are* the self. So it is, that in both the secular and the religious realms, the path to success resembles the path to failure, and self-knowledge resembles self-ignorance, and redemption resembles sacrifice. "At the decisive moment," writes Simone Weil, "the difference between the soul which is saved and that which is lost is but infinitesimal compared with the whole psychological content of the soul." The whole psychological content of the soul, at once triumphant and defeated, is Coleridge's arena in the *Biographia*. But he needed to press on beyond such triumph-in-defeat toward actual redemption. He wrote a mordant, painful poem at the end of his life, at the end of all his inquiries, in which he conceded defeat, and readied himself for sacrifice. It is called "Self-Knowledge," and has as its tag the line from Juvenal that Coleridge loved. "Say, canst thou make thyself?" is how it begins:

> What hast thou, Man, that thou dar'st
> call thine own?
> What is there in thee, Man, that can be
> known?—
> Dark fluxion, all unfixable by thought,
> A phantom dim of past and future
> wrought

And finally Coleridge, having looked at defeat, turns away, and feebly ends the poem with the line: "Ignore thyself, and strive to know thy God!" The battle was over. Christ had won by never fighting.

IV.

In one area, however, Coleridge absolutely triumphed, and with an interesting lack of struggle. This was in his literary criticism. For here, particularly in his commentaries on Shakespeare, there peaceably recur many of the terms that fight each other in his philosophy and theology of the self, now applied with perfect ease and equanimity to literature. Or more exactly, the terms that clog Coleridge's drama of the self become freeing when applied to the drama of fictional selves. His idea of "negative faith," which is expounded in the *Biographia*, is really no more than the idea that true drama subdues us by its own free force. Negative faith "permits the images presented to work by their own force, without either denial or affirmation of their real existence by the judgement." In other words, the supervening will or judgment is quieted, is lulled into a kind of sleep, and a sort of willing passivity overcomes the watcher. What was such a menace to the self, in philosophy, is, in literature, a strategy of dramatic power.

Following Aristotle, Coleridge argues that even impossible happenings may seem to us dramatic probabilities when a true poet is at work: "The poet does not require us to be awake and believe; he solicits us only to yield ourselves to a dream; and this too with our eyes open, and with our judgment *perdue* behind the curtain, ready to awaken us at the first motion of our will: and meantime only, not to *dis*believe." Our will is watchful, and may be roused by unbelievable work, but is apparently content otherwise to doze in the perfume of its own suspension. In a

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marginal note on one of Sir Walter Scott's novels, Coleridge censures Scott for trying to create a delightful, rambling character like Mistress Quickly and muffing it. Scott's character is too busy expressing strong authorial opinions, and is not irresponsible or freely discursive enough. "It is the weak memory that is discursive not the strong feeling," is his shrewd comment.

SLEEP; THE SLUMBROUS WILL; the rambling, discursive memory; negative faith (which Coleridge contrasts with the positive faith required by history and religion): what were dangers to the self philosophically, and dangers to himself personally, have become now a gentle Arden in the world of literary criticism. It is difficult not to conclude that Coleridge relaxes his clench on the will in this area because he has left the precincts of religion. Thus, in one notebook entry, he characterizes poetry as "a rationalized dream." He is at ease, he has truly escaped himself, and what makes him so good a critic of Shakespeare's characters is that he welcomes their amorality, reminding us that just as in Homer all the Gods are in armor, even Venus, in Shakespeare all the characters are strong (that is, interesting and attractive even when they are wicked). No one has written better about Iago than Coleridge, because Coleridge sees his glittering attraction, sees that Iago is at times "a bold partisan for truth." Coleridge has an extremely advanced idea of how Shakespeare uses even despised and despicable characters to speak general truths. He always pointed out that Polonius was misrepresented on stage, that he was not supposed to be a buffoon but a statesman "somewhat past his faculties ... the personified memory of wisdom no longer actually possessed." "In thus placing these profound general truths in the mouths of such men as Cornwall, Edmund, Iago, etc., Shakespeare at once gives them utterance, and yet shows how indefinite their utterance is." Coleridge wrote well about such characters because he understood their struggles, understood their weaknesses.

His criticism of Shakespeare, and of the necessary irresponsibility of drama, was truly secular. It is possible to confirm this because of a moment in his *Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit*. For Coleridge, the scriptures were writings that had to be read like other great writings, and made susceptible to our individual torque. How do we know, he asks, that the Bible was written by fallible people and not dictated by an infallible God? We know this in part because of the dramatic narrative of the Book of Job. God could not have written a story that was such an argument against Himself. Only a human could have done so. In other words, God is not a dramatist. He does not have negative capability. He demands not negative faith, but positive faith. Dramatic narrative puts the world in doubt, Coleridge implies. It corrugates belief, makes it more difficult. Narrative is a formal filibuster that slows down belief until belief falls asleep and begins to dream its opposite, its negative.

V.

INSTALLED AT THE top of James Gillman's house, largely cured of his addiction, Coleridge was much visited. His *obiter dicta* were collected like relics. Regardant and relaxed, he expanded into a gentle, premature old age. He was no longer a cloud chasing all the winds of knowledge. Though of course he read ravenously, his diet was blander, fortified by the strong, sure taste of his Christian faith. So the bold, reckless, weak, great mind, always free, always gloriously uninsured, made its peace. Yet not without a small stir. In his last few months, he said to his son-in-law, who recorded it: "I am dying, but without expectation of speedy release. Is it not strange that very recently bygone images, and scenes of early life, have stolen into my mind, like breezes blown from the spice islands of Youth and Hope ... I wish life and strength had been spared to me to complete my Philosophy. For, as God hears me, the originating, continuing, and sustaining wish and design in my heart was to exalt the glory of his name; and, which is the same thing in other words, to promote the improvement of mankind. But *visum aliter Deo* [God has decided otherwise], and his will be done." ■

At Unease

By CASS R. SUNSTEIN

Don't: A Reader's Guide to the Military's Anti-Gay Policy by Janet E. Halley

(Duke University Press, 159 pp., $14.95)

IN 1993, JAMIE GORELICK, general counsel of the Department of Defense, testified before a subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee. Defending President Clinton's new "don't ask, don't tell" policy, Gorelick was asked to explain how someone alleged to be homosexual could establish that she was not, in fact, homosexual. Gorelick answered with an example: "In one instance a woman was alleged to have said that she was a lesbian. She came in and said essentially that the statement had been misunderstood.... And actually, she introduced evidence—she brought in boyfriends who testified essentially that she was heterosexual—and the conclusion was reached that she would be retained." Gorelick offered this illustration to show how accused members could prove their heterosexuality and defend themselves against losing their job.

At that moment in the House hearings, you might suppose that the ban on homosexuals in the military would be in serious trouble. Is it really possible to imagine a trial in which a member of the American military has to defend herself against a charge of lesbianism by asking former boyfriends to testify on her behalf? What would the boyfriends be expected to say? Would they be subject to cross-examination? If the issue is whether the defendant is really homosexual, what particular questions might be asked, by way of resolving that contested issue? Surely—you might suppose—Gorelick's commendably candid response would raise doubts about the legitimacy of the policy that she was attempting to defend. Yet there was no visible reaction to Gorelick's anecdote. It was as if the proceeding that she described was perfectly acceptable, a matter of common sense, entirely routine.

Since 1982, the Department of Defense had maintained a policy requiring separation of any servicemember deemed to be "homosexual," defined as "a person, regardless of sex, who engages in, desires to engage in, or intends to engage in homosexual acts." (Branches of the military had set out similar bans for decades before.) In 1991, in his campaign for the presidency, Bill Clinton made this prohibition an issue, and in late 1992, Presi-

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dent-elect Clinton said that he intended to "lift the ban" on homosexuals in the military. In the President's very first week in office, however, the Joint Chiefs of Staff (including the immensely popular Colin Powell) threatened to resign in protest over any such effort, and George Mitchell, the Senate Majority Leader, told Clinton that there were seventy votes against the President's proposed decision. This was the beginning of the "don't ask, don't tell" policy (sometimes called "don't ask, don't tell, don't pursue")—a compromise reached among the White House, the Joint Chiefs, and the Senate opposition.

TWO DOCUMENTS EVENTUALLY emerged: a new Defense Department policy and a new statute, the latter putting a ban on homosexual conduct into federal legislation for the first time. The governing regulations, continuing on the books, begin by proclaiming that "homosexuality is incompatible with military service. The presence in the military environment of persons who engage in homosexual conduct or who, by their statements, demonstrate a propensity to engage in homosexual conduct, seriously impairs the accomplishment of the military mission." A homosexual is defined exactly as before. Separation from the service will come from either homosexual conduct or statements indicative of homosexuality. A member of the service may be discharged if he has stated that he is homosexual or bisexual, "unless there is a further finding that the member is not a homosexual or bisexual." Homosexual acts will result in discharge unless there are further findings—unless it is shown, among other things, that the conduct is unlikely to recur (the "queen for a day" exception) and that (despite the acts in question) the soldier does not desire or intend to engage in homosexual acts. At the same time, the new policy announces that commanders would not ask members of the service about their sexual orientation; there would be no "asking" and no "pursuit." The Department of Defense also recognizes that "individuals with a homosexual orientation have served with distinction in the armed services of the United States." Sexual orientation is not a bar to service without conduct; but a statement of homosexuality counts as conduct.

Later in 1993, Congress enacted a statute, growing out of the new Pentagon policy but significantly less protective of gay and lesbian servicemembers. The statute—it is the first actual law on the subject—is rooted in a congressional finding that the "presence in the armed forces of persons who demonstrate a propensity or intent to engage in homosexual acts would create an unacceptable risk to the high standards of morale, good order and discipline, and unit cohesion that are the essence of military capability." Under the statute, members must be separated from the armed forces under two circumstances. The first is "conduct," and here the statute is essentially the same as the Defense Department policy, but with an important proviso: a homosexual act is not merely same-sex erotic bodily contact, but also "any bodily contact which a reasonable person would understand to demonstrate a propensity or intent to engage in a" same-sex sexual act. The second is when a member "tells," and here the statute is more complicated.

The statute says that if a service member makes a statement that "he or she is a homosexual or bisexual," discharge must follow, unless there is a "further finding" that he or she "is not a person who engages in, attempted to engage in, has a propensity to engage in, or intends to engage in homosexual acts." Under the Defense Department directive implementing this statute, moreover, a "statement by a member that demonstrates a propensity or intent to engage in homosexual acts is grounds for separation not because it reflects the member's sexual orientation but because the statement indicates a likelihood that the member engages in or will engage in homosexual acts." Sexual orientation itself "is considered a personal and private matter," and not a bar to continued service.

WHAT ACCOUNTS FOR the shift from the old policy to the new one, and then to the new statute? What is the meaning of this shift? Janet Halley attempts to answer these questions not on the basis of interviews or conventional investigative techniques, but with close readings of the new policy and law, and with an exhaustive examination of the public record (hearings, press conferences, speeches, congressional debates). Halley thinks that this system is "*much, much worse* than its predecessor," and that a principal culprit is the Department of Justice, which, in her view, is the likely source of "the most alarming innovation in the new policy—a new set of rules that allows homosexual conduct to be inferred from supposed homosexual status."

Halley's target—what she means to challenge as false, indeed fraudulent—is the widespread view that the new policy is more lenient than the old one, and that there has been a large-scale shift from discharging servicemembers for their "status" toward discharging them for their "conduct." Much of her discussion is dedicated to showing that the new rule does not bar status-related discharges—that status plays a large if sometimes subtle role under the new policy, in large part by requiring accused members to defend their heterosexual status. The result of all this is a kind of culture of surveillance, in which members must avoid giving anyone a hint of "conduct that manifests a propensity."

Halley acknowledges that unlike the new policy, the old policy was explicitly based on status, authorizing "military officials to determine not only what servicemembers did but what they desired and intended, all with the aim of determining who they were." President Clinton attempted to obtain a departure from this policy; having been blocked in his effort to lift the ban, he sought to shift regulatory attention from status to conduct. Thus Secretary of Defense Les Aspin explained that the purpose of the revision was to focus attention on "not what they are, but what they do," and President Clinton insisted publicly that "the emphasis should be always on people's conduct, not their status." After Congress enacted the statute, many people, including Clinton and Aspin, claimed that it merely reiterated and codified the new Defense Department policy, embodying the shift from status to conduct.

HALLEY THINKS THAT this is all quite misleading, even a form of deceit. To be sure, the president "had no choice" but to retreat, and homosexual status alone (whatever that may mean) is no longer a basis for separation from military service. "But the 1993 revisions, even if they do not target people on the basis of their status, are nevertheless deeply, pervasively, and creatively ascriptive." Perhaps the most important point is that the "Clinton administration did introduce several elements of more or less simple conduct regulation, but Congress ... eliminated every single one of them in favor of heavily status-inflected revisions."

For one thing, Congress refused to recognize, as did the Defense Department, that homosexuals had served, and are serving, with distinction in the military. (Many military officials, including Colin Powell, so testified before Congress.) For another, Congress rejected Clinton's proposal to focus exclusively on sexual misconduct, and it showed no interest in his (fairly radical) suggestion that the grounds of sexual misconduct should be applied without regard to sexual orientation. Thus Congress refused to follow the Defense Department's suggested policy requiring commanders to investigate allegations of sodomy "in an even-handed manner without regard to whether the

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conduct alleged is heterosexual or homosexual."

Congress also defined homosexual acts to include not only bodily contact "for the purpose of satisfying sexual desires," but also bodily contact which a reasonable person would understand to demonstrate a "propensity or intent to engage in" acts designed to satisfy sexual desires. (Might this include hugging or holding hands?) And finally Congress also refused to require "don't ask" in the statute itself. The consequence has been that the "don't ask" idea—the only remaining trace of protection for gay and lesbian service members—is the current executive branch policy, but it is not the law, and it may be changed by another administration.

Halley thinks that Clinton was able to seek only "the appearance, not the reality, of a 'don't ask' reform." Even under the Defense Department policy, a range of indirect questions can be—and are—asked about sexual orientation, without violating the ban on direct questions. In any case, both the policy and the statute allow an investigation to result from "any evidence of conduct that manifests a propensity to engage in homosexual conduct." As we shall see, commanding officers have a great deal of discretion to interpret this phrase.

On Adam

Names hurt.
And not Zeus, not Medusa turns us
to sticks and stones—
there Ovid was joking. It was sculptures
he saw, bright Greek sculptures, cursed
in the gardens, now ruins.

Medusa indeed!
Do you think she painted
men, too, like an undertaker?
Did she name and play with her dolls,
rip off clothes, break their arms
or a nose?

Would a god turn men,
heart and soul, to foliage and stone
so they'd last? God-dance is riddance to bodies. It's man
who needs without end—dominion,
monument, and a name
to give a damn.
It's Adam.

Muriel Nelson

One of Halley's most interesting discussions involves the post-1993 emphasis on this idea of "propensity," a genuine innovation, not to be found in any predecessor provision. With some interesting and suggestive (though not at all conclusive) sleuthing, Halley attributes the innovation to the Department of Justice. What is the underlying idea here? Halley identifies two possibilities, which she labels "the actuarial model" and the "psychometric model." Under the actuarial model, the idea of propensity points simply to a statistical likelihood: "detecting people with a propensity is merely a prudent way of identifying servicemembers who are likely to engage in harmful conduct and getting them out of the military before they can actually harm its essences." Under the psychometric model, by contrast, a "propensity" is not a statistical matter but "an inner, intrinsic, even natural or innate characteristic." This model "attributes a pathological personal trait to each individual homosexual." Halley believes that the "psychometric model of homosexual propensity is a hidden premise of the actuarial model," and that the result of the focus on "propensity" is to obliterate any simple distinction between status and conduct.

Attorney General Janet Reno, among others, has claimed that the law is concerned only with conduct because members have an "opportunity to rebut" a presumed propensity to act; but Halley thinks that this is "particularly disingenuous." The reason is that the presumption—based on statements or other evidence of "propensity"—imposes on accused members a "heavy handicap," thus achieving "substantive outcomes under the guise of a merely technical change in procedure." The system of presumption-and-rebuttal also produces a high degree of arbitrariness, as individual commanding officers have considerable discretion to decide what statements and what acts show a "propensity."

The definition of homosexual acts at work here includes bodily contact which (in the words of the 1993 law) "a reasonable person would understand to demonstrate a propensity or intent to engage in" erotic, same-sex bodily contacts. Halley thinks that this is "the most important innovation" of the 1993 reforms. Who is this reasonable person, and what inferences are diverse (and reasonable?) people permitted to draw? Halley contends that members must "imagine a lexicon of conduct-that-my-commander-thinks-to-manifest-a-propensity." To counteract the threat of discharge, therefore, "acting viciously anti-gay is probably the best way" to provide insulation against suspicion.

All this seems to me a bit of hyperbole on Halley's part; but in practice the results have been a mess. Compare two cases, both of which involved actual trials. In one case, Air Force Captain Richard Richenberg testified that he had recently realized that he was homosexual, but that he had not engaged in, and he did not intend to engage in, prohibited conduct. Richenberg made a sharp distinction between homosexual "attraction" and "doing it," and said that he disapproved of casual sex on moral grounds, and added that at the time when he considered himself heterosexual, he had honored his belief that sexual intercourse should not occur until marriage. But he was discharged, with the trial court saying that it "is of no constitutional significance that the plaintiff may in fact have no propensity to engage in homosexual conduct." By way of contrast, consider the servicemember who said that he was a "homosexual," that he had "feelings toward men and women" but "sexual feelings" only for women, and that he had decided not to engage in same-sex conduct because he feared "catching a disease." In this case it was held that he had rebutted the presumption and could retain his job. The two cases exemplify a set of extremely messy results.

For Halley, the most general problem is that "if you have been found to have engaged in conduct that manifests a propensity to engage in same-sex erotic acts, you are going to be discharged unless you can prove that you have no such propensity," and to prove that, "you need to prove your status." The result is that "heterosexuality prevails" under the policy—at the expense, in practice, of homosexuals, who are at risk of discharge, and of heterosexuals, who are at risk of false accusation. This, then, is Halley's basic analysis of "don't ask, don't tell": that it is not a shift from status to conduct, and not a safe refuge for discreet homosexual service members, but a recipe for widely variable and improvised diagnoses of "propensities," and a system that ties "status to conduct and conduct to status in surprising, devious, ingenious, and perverse ways."

An obvious issue arises. Is the policy

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constitutional? In a brief discussion, Halley notes that the Constitution is taken to prevent government from punishing people for their "status" alone, and many of the constitutional challenges insist that discrimination has occurred "based on their status, not their conduct." But Halley thinks that this strategy "is an insult to the personal sexual dignity of most servicemember clients." She wants those who challenge the policy to accept, even to "revel in" the (hardly surprising) fact that "self-identified homosexuals do engage in more same-sex erotic conduct than those who identify otherwise." She would also like courts to strike down the policy under either the First Amendment or the Equal Protection Clause.

Courts might conclude, for example, that "the 'don't tell' rules regulate speech according to its content, without excuse when the content itself—homosexual status—is expressly permitted." Or they could conclude "that it is irrational," and hence violative of the equal protection clause, "to protect against conduct-based harm to military effectiveness when homosexuals engage in the conduct but not when heterosexuals do, or when open homosexuals rather than closeted ones do it." More broadly, courts "could observe that unit cohesion, privacy in the barracks and the showers, and sexual tranquility are eroded, not promoted, by the policy's joint legitimation of servicemembers' homophobic sensibilities and of secretive homosexual presence in the military." Thus Halley simultaneously challenges a leading strategy of gay rights organizations (to contest the policy as "status" regulation) and urges courts to invalidate the policy on a variety of constitutional grounds.

THIS IS A CLEAR, careful, and illuminating account of the various shifts in the substance of the policy, and of who lost (mostly gay rights advocates and Clinton) and who gained (mostly supporters of the old policy). Halley also shows, quite convincingly, that while the new policy does not target status "alone," it is hopelessly inadequate to describe it as a regulation of conduct rather than status. Indeed, her discussion of the "propensity" issue is a tour de force. For anyone interested in the "don't ask, don't tell" policy, this is an excellent place to start. But there are problems.

Halley's discussion is very much focussed on public texts, and her analysis is above all a textual analysis, with comparatively little discussion of the real-world effects of the 1993 revisions and their predecessor. Owing to the limitations of her textual focus, I do not believe that Halley establishes her claim that the new policy is "*much, much worse* than its predecessor," or even worse at all. It is not easy to see how the new approach, or for that matter any approach, can be worse than one that requires discharge of anyone "who engages in, desires to engage in, or intends to engage in homosexual acts." Perhaps the new policy is more misleading, more deceptive, more unpredictable, more confusing; but is it really worse than a policy that requires discharge of anyone who desires or intends to engage in homosexual acts?

TO ANSWER THIS question, we need to know more, and not only more about texts. What have been the trends for dismissal of homosexuals from the military? Are the numbers going down or up? To the extent that they are changing, to what extent is the reason for the change the policy itself? Halley offers extremely little statistical evidence about the empirical questions, and this is a large omission. In fact, the data support her basic position. From 1982 to 1994, there was a decline *every year* in the number of people discharged for homosexuality: 1,998 in 1982, 1,660 in 1985, 996 in 1989, 730 in 1992, 682 in 1993, and 617 in 1994. Yet the numbers have gone up steadily since that time: 757 in 1995, 858 in 1996, 997 in 1997, and 1,145 in 1998—the largest number since 1987.

But all this still does not tell the whole story. To evaluate these discouraging numbers, it would be valuable to know the number of homosexuals who have entered the military at various points—and also to know the circumstances of the discharges in various periods. Were the discharges in 1982-1990 systematically different from those in the last five years? Has there been a greater trend toward discharging people based on unrebutted "propensities"? Have relevant military officials become more intensely opposed to homosexuals in the last five years? Halley does not discuss these matters.

Nor does she deal much with the series of abuses, recently acknowledged by the Pentagon, that have followed on the heels of the policy. These abuses have included various forms of intimidation and harassment—some of them cases in which service members complaining of harassment have found themselves, rather than their harassers, under investigation. In a widely publicized event, a soldier rumored to be gay was recently killed with a baseball bat at Fort Campbell, Kentucky. It is far from clear whether these events are a product of the new policy; what is clear is that the new policy has not prevented them. The Defense Department has recently announced guidelines designed to prevent the most egregious abuses, but it remains to be seen whether these guidelines will do much good.

Perhaps the greatest oddity of Halley's instructive book is that, while her main goal is to show that the new policy is not based on "conduct," she also believes that the policy would be little better if it were in fact based only on conduct. She thinks, plausibly, that a policy based only on conduct would be an insult to the dignity of homosexual servicemembers. And this point is connected to another surprising feature of the book: Halley's thin discussion of the underlying questions of policy and law. We get little sense of why the military was so strongly resistant to Clinton's proposal—of what interests underlie the military's reluctance to lift the ban entirely, and of whether those interests are legitimate. Halley shows that those who sought some kind of ban believe that "unit cohesion" is at risk from open homosexuality, and that recruitment and morale would be endangered if soldiers were aware that they were serving with homosexuals, partly because people must live in such close quarters. It is clear that Halley finds these arguments weak, but she does not analyze them in any detail.

THE RELEVANT ANXIETIES take several forms. The first is that sexual relationships and sexual impositions—above all, involving superiors—are intolerable in the military setting. A prime concern is sexual harassment. To be sure, there is an irony in seeing the law of sexual harassment invoked by people not normally so enthusiastic about that law; some defenders of the policy seem to fear that homosexual men will frequently treat heterosexual men the same way that heterosexual men sometimes treat women, and they are eager to protect heterosexual men against that kind of treatment. Undoubtedly many people do believe that sexual harassment is intolerable, and that all steps should be taken to ensure that it does not occur in the military setting. If sexual impositions create the difficulty, however, then the natural solution is to ban sexual impositions of any kind, not to forbid gays and lesbians from serving their country.

Perhaps the problem is not sexual harassment, but sexual relations. Perhaps the military setting is incompatible with even voluntary sexual relations among members of the service, at least when they must work together in close quarters. But if this is so—and it certainly seems reasonable to think that it is so—then the solution is to ban the relevant relations. Indeed, current policy imposes restrictions on "fraternization," and any such restrictions could be applied to homosexual relationships.

Perhaps the strongest argument against

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a true reform of this discriminatory policy—and what really seems to underlie the idea of "unit cohesion"—is that even without sexual harassment and sexual relations, it would be very hard for many young men and women to know that they are serving with open gays and lesbians. Of course there is, in the military, a degree of segregation between young men and young women, partly to prevent the kinds of entanglements, tensions, and misunderstandings that might genuinely undermine military preparation and effectiveness. The ban on open homosexuality is designed to prevent the same sorts of difficulties. And if the lifting of that ban really would hurt morale and recruitment, and cause serious internal problems, it would not be so easy for outsiders to dismiss the military's underlying concern. When Colin Powell and other members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff resisted President Clinton's initiative in 1993, this was their fundamental objection. And there is a genuine interest in sexual privacy as well, raised most vividly, perhaps, in the context of communal barracks and showers.

Yet this argument is not without its own problems. If some young people find it hard to work in close quarters with homosexuals, this is often because of a form of ignorance and prejudice (and sometimes hatred) that is not ordinarily a legitimate basis for denying people employment opportunities. Giving into these feelings tends to perpetuate and to ratify them. The argument also depends on highly speculative empirical claims about the harmful effects of a nondiscriminatory policy. It is important to remember that an exceptionally wide range of countries do not exclude homosexuals from the armed services. There are no bans, no analogues to "don't ask, don't tell," and apparently no problems for "unit cohesion" in Denmark, Norway, Finland, Belgium, Spain, the Netherlands, France, Canada, Germany, Switzerland, Sweden, and Israel. Nor must we look abroad for similar evidence. Gays and lesbians fought for their country in World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War, and their military records show that they served the nation as well, on average, as heterosexuals.

To be sure, sexual privacy is a legitimate interest, and perhaps a nondiscriminatory policy would require special efforts to protect privacy. But if military commanders were genuinely committed to make nondiscrimination work, it is hard to imagine that such a policy would create serious problems. Does this mean, then, that courts should strike down "don't ask, don't tell," as Halley urges, under the First Amendment or the Equal Protection Clause? There are hard questions here. The military imposes a wide range of legitimate restrictions on the speech of servicemembers, and in the military context it does not violate the First Amendment to use statements as evidence of conduct, if the conduct is independently unacceptable. If the military forbids the use of cocaine, it is perfectly entitled to take a member's statement, "I like to use cocaine," as evidence of cocaine use; indeed, there would be no First Amendment problem with taking the statement, "I am a cocaine user," or "I would like to use cocaine," as evidence of an intention or a propensity to use cocaine, at least if the member is permitted a rebuttal. The "don't ask, don't tell" policy reaches somewhat further, but when combined with the general power of the military to regulate speech by members of the service, this point is probably sufficient to defeat a First Amendment challenge.

Despite the policy's regulation of "telling," the real question is not one of free speech. It is whether homosexuals have been denied the equal protection of the laws. As Halley acknowledges, and as recent courts have emphasized, members of the service are not entitled to the same rights as civilians. When the military is involved, courts should be extremely cautious about rejecting the considered judgments of the elected branches of government. But it is one thing to adopt a general posture of deference; it is quite another for courts to permit the government to exclude, to stigmatize, and to humiliate a class of citizens whose members have long served the nation with distinction.

In the aftermath of a large number of documented abuses, the Defense Department is now embarking on an effort to ensure against harassment, violence, and witch-hunts—to provide anti-harassment training and to require investigations to be launched only on the basis of solid evidence. But even if the reforms make things better, there is something farcical and bizarre, and more than slightly Orwellian, about this earnest and highly publicized effort to ensure that people will be investigated, as acknowledged or practicing homosexuals, only if there is actual evidence that they are, in fact, acknowledged or practicing homosexuals. The most fundamental problem with the policy is not the occasional abuses, egregious as some have been, but its very core.

The best solution would be for Congress, which has an independent obligation to the Constitution, to reject the "don't ask, don't tell" policy on equal protection grounds, and to work with the military to accommodate its concerns. But this is one of the exceedingly rare cases, I think, in which courts would be justified in invalidating a military practice under the Constitution.

In 1992, in *Sex and Reason*, Richard Posner observed that "it is terrible to tell people they are unfit to serve their country, unless they really are unfit, which is not the case here." Since he wrote those words, more than 5,056 members of the American military have been discharged under "don't ask, don't tell," a number of them after being placed under oath and asked, before a trier of fact, whether they have a "propensity" to be interested in men, women, or both. Numerous other members of the military, now serving their country and prepared to risk their lives on its behalf, face a similar fate. The "don't ask, don't tell" policy is an atrocity. The sooner we are rid of it, the better. ■

CORRESPONDENCE

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As a practicing psychiatrist, I agree that it's unlikely that 13 percent of Americans have social anxiety disorder. But, even if it affects only 1.3 percent of the population, that's still millions of people whose lives are maimed. The carnage is real, but silent: romances never begun, careers never undertaken, hopes never realized.

I know, because I work with such patients in my office, a few blocks from your headquarters. For the past several years, my colleagues and I have been treating them, often with a combination of medication and specialized psychological treatment. Several medicines help, with Paxil being the first to get official FDA approval.

My principal regret is that Cottle's piece will discourage people from seeking treatment. Contrary to the impression she conveys, the disorder is real, and treatment often helps. In the words of a former patient, "I have a whole new life."

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The editors welcome correspondence from readers. Please address letters to: Correspondence, TNR, 1220 19th Street, NW, Washington, D.C., 20036 (letters may also be sent electronically to: tnr@aol.com). All letters should include the writer's full name, address, and telephone number; be typed double-spaced; and be held to under 200 words. Letters may be edited for space. Please do not send letters via fax.

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CAPE COD DIARIST

War of Words

I'VE BEEN READING CONOR Cruise O'Brien's magisterial book about Edmund Burke, *The Great Melody*, which—following on a line from Yeats—shows, among other truths, how the correct and beautiful use of language not only adds to the power of an idea but is a part of the idea itself, is in fact essential to its harmony. It's been a long time since the English-speaking world has had a Burke. And you have to go back at least as far as Winston Churchill to get some sense of the authority found in words designed to inspire. With Churchill, of course, you are in Britain. You have to go further back, to Abraham Lincoln at least, to hear a truly great melody of politics in America. Obviously, language isn't everything. It is true that Franklin Roosevelt was actually quite eloquent, or was able to be, but he advanced our democracy more through a certain canniness and courage than by inspiring the citizenry. Still, we remember his words. Ronald Reagan was a verbal bumbler, maybe because he was uncomfortable with weighty thoughts. He did, however, have instincts, which, after all, are second cousins to ideas, and these shrewd instincts, encapsulated in Reagan's presidency, drove Soviet power off the field just when the better thinkers and the brainier talkers, both Democratic and Republican, were preparing to cede half the world permanently to communism.

BUT, AS ONE OF GEORGE W. BUSH'S fellow Texans might say to him, "You're no Ronald Reagan." As presidential timber, Bush is more the Millard Fillmore type. You can't even compare him to his blithe and blah father, who, as TNR contributing editor and Princeton historian Sean Wilentz pointed out in a recent *New York Times* op-ed, once really believed in something. Even many victory-obsessed Republicans now seem less entranced by the empty head who has been leading in the polls. That's one meaning of the August 14 Iowa encampment, where W., the anointed winner, got less than one-third of the vote. Deep in its heart and guts, the Republican party is ideologically inclined—and ideologies are first cousins to ideas—so GOP stalwarts, even those who support Bush, have trouble overcoming the Texan's apparent agnosticisms. Not that he hasn't, as governor, proven his deft faithfulness to the big interests. What he hasn't done is make them feel really good and really moral about their greed. That's what Steve Forbes's journey (surely unsettling to W.) is all about, and the heir to the self-proclaimed "Capitalist Tool" is willing to pay the freight himself. But don't count on Bush suddenly discovering the virtues of a higher inheritance tax.

SINCE THERE ARE NO BIG IDEAS IN the Bush campaign, there is no elevated language, either. Now, one can't quite say that W. butchers English. But, out of his mouth, the language has no music. Don't look for any great melody from him. Bush's voice is trivial; it does not elevate, and it is not memorable. His sentences do not read well, and they don't parse right either. Am I the only one to have noticed this grammatically gross utterance? "I hope you can join Laura and I to send a message that I'm the right guy." So much for the objective case: gone is the word "me," and presumably "him" and "her" and "them." This syntactical tic is actually common among people 25 years younger than Bush, and perhaps they won't even hear the mistake. But if Bush's talk about high educational standards is authentic, one of his goals, surely, must be for our children to write and speak English that, though flexible and alert to change, is wondrous to read and hear—and, not coincidentally, also right. Well, the talk is just . . . talk. And Bush's words can't possibly be wondrous because his aims aren't: "I'm running with one thing in mind; I'm running to become the next president of the United States." He's running because he's running. Really! There's no lofty way of saying that. So, let's all join Laura and he and tell everyone that Bush is the right guy.

I KNOW THAT BILL BRADLEY IS SAID to have lofty thoughts, with lofty words to go along with them, and he certainly has asserted that he does. But he hasn't quite confided them to us, at least not yet. You can't discern them from his three-term Senate record, either. To be sure, he had at least one legitimate accomplishment as a senator: a loophole-eliminating, rate-lowering tax reform, which he pushed through with help from Richard Gephardt and the Reagan administration Treasury Department (not to mention editorial support from TNR). More recently, though, he's come out against the 1996 welfare reform law, a position that puts him wildly out of step with public opinion and which, if Bradley were elected, would mean the rollback of the signature centrist advance of the Clinton-Gore era. And, of course, Bradley broods about race in America. This distinguishes him from Bush, who broods about nothing. But brooding isn't policy. We do know that he was a leader of no one while a senator. This positions him well to run as a populist, and he has given hints that this is his intention. Perhaps that's why the information technology banker Herb Allen (who brought Bradley along to hobnob at his annual Sun Valley summer camp for IT and media moguls) and Barry Diller are big players in his court.

SOME DEMOCRATS HAVE GRAVITATED to Bradley with the comically mistaken impression that as a campaigner, unlike Al Gore, he is Mr. Saturday Night. The truth is that Bradley is dull without being truly grave, and that even when Gore is truly grave, he is not dull. In fact, when Gore is truly grave, he is at his most passionate and his most learned. Yes, I mean learned precisely in the way that no president since Wilson and Hoover has been. Yes, Gore is also formal and exquisitely courteous, even a bit wooden. He is, in these matters, a man of the decorous South—the modern post-segregation South, to be sure, but the South nonetheless. But maybe we're ready for someone who wouldn't be comfortable discussing his underwear on MTV. He would restore to the White House the dignity we once took as a given and demanded if we didn't have it. And his sentences are carefully crafted, less for effect, it is true, than for meaning. But good meaning has its own good effect. Gore's sentences are the work of an honest person . . . and of a deeply literate one. The first big book in his life was the King James Version of the Bible, which was once a treasure of the common reader. Once—no longer. But it is still a treasure for Gore, and it is one reason why he puzzles over ultimate questions. And, since the Hebrew Bible especially is a book of practical laws, it is another reason why he dares to wrestle also with concrete answers. No one in our public life is quite like him. He is secure in the earliest beliefs of our civilization and ventures confidently into the latest discoveries of that civilization. He is at home alike in faith and with science. The great melody has not yet come from Gore, and maybe it never will. But grand constructions are built on small and sensible elements. And, in last week's *Barron's*, a curious venue for such an argument, Jim McTague contends that Gore is rightly positioned, politically and economically, "where Americans . . . appear to want their politicians to be." When will the rest of the press pay heed?

MARTIN PERETZ

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